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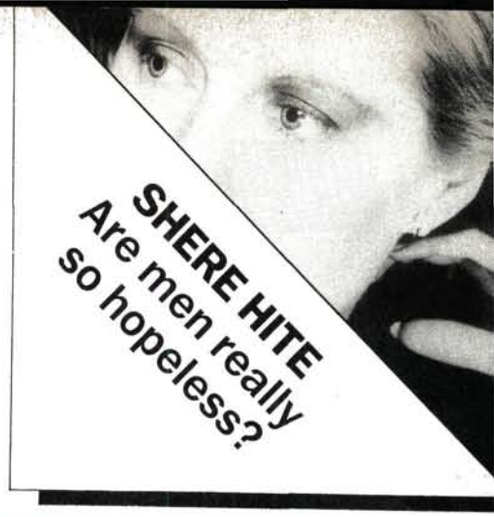

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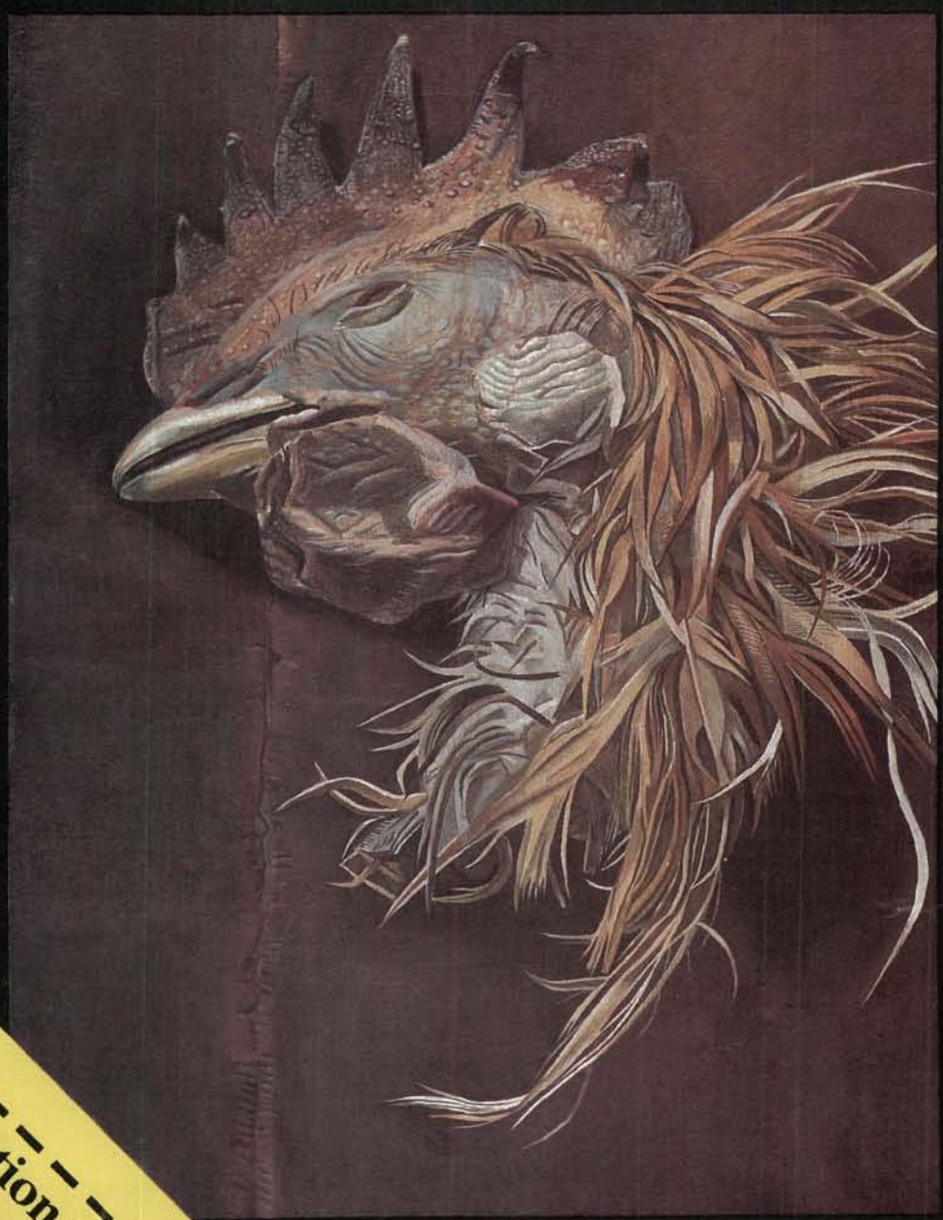

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Modern Painters
Editor Peter Fuller

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NEW STATESMAN

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Noam Chomsky on Palestine; Duncan Campbell on the myth of the man who made the Aids epidemic; Eduardo Galeano on death and greed in the Americas

In a police cell

FORTY YEARS ago Britain signed the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Thirty-seven years later, a 13 year old boy sat shivering in his underpants in a North London police station, accused of the murder of PC Keith Blakelock in the Broadwater Farm riots. The police questioned him for 15 hours, and for most of that time the boy (whose name can't be given) was wrapped only in a blanket. He was held in custody for 52 hours, and was not allowed to see a solicitor.

Towards the end of the interrogation, he broke down emotionally and started crying. He told the police that during the riot he had been given a sword, and was taken over to PC Blakelock's body and told to make a cut in it because he had seen too much. He said he had made one cut on the police officer's leg and one on his chest.

He was put on trial for murder. The judge threw the case out on the grounds that on nine separate points the police treatment was oppressive or illegal, and that his interrogators should have noticed that the child was "drifting more and more into fantasy".

This account comes from a shaming report published last week by Amnesty International on the Broadwater Farm riots. Amnesty's researchers concluded that "the police have regularly used threats and intimidation against those suspected of serious offences in connection with the disturbances." It's the first time that Amnesty has produced a report on human rights abuses on the British mainland.

The Broadwater Farm affair, it's now clear, raised grave issues of civil liberties, not least over the case of the principal defendant, Winston Silcott, who was convicted of the murder of PC Blakelock solely on the basis of incriminating statements allegedly made by him. The prosecution claimed that Silcott had been the ringleader of several hundred rioters, even though among a thousand official pictures taken of the riots he could not been seen in a single one. (Contrast this with the alleged difficulty the Police Complaints Authority had in identifying the guilty police officers — out of twelve — in the Holloway Road assault case.)

The crime for which Silcott received life imprisonment was so horrific that almost nobody questioned whether the conviction was safe. Instead, the media seemed to take Lord Denning's view, expressed at the weekend, that there are times when it is better to lock up the innocent. He said that "the integrity of our system and upholding it is one of the foundations of our society. I would put aside all these rough justice cases in favour of upholding our system of justice."

Is this what the government thinks about Broadwater Farm? We don't really know, because Home Secretary Douglas Hurd has a figleaf which prevents him reviewing the case. The matter, he argues, is effectively sub judice, since one case may still be the subject of an appeal attempt, and others are before the Police Complaints Authority. But his response to the report so far is a masterpiece of deceit which ought to quash forever the myth that he is a "liberal" Home Secretary.

First he told Amnesty that it had no business involving itself in the Broadwater Farm riot — the knee-jerk reaction of tyrants the world over when Amnesty has blown their cover. Amnesty's statute allows it to investigate the treatment in custody of "political prisoners". It interprets the term broadly, pointing out that the Broadwater Farm disturbances "took place in a highly charged and political atmosphere".

Then Hurd took up the question of whether the police should be required to tell detainees of their rights to see a solicitor — a right which Amnesty has pressed to see made law. Such a right, said Hurd, already exists under the code of practice to the 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act. This deliberately misses the point: the code is not law, and breaches of it are merely disciplinary offences. Besides, said Hurd, the code and the act were not in force at the time of the riots (though he acknowledged that the police officers in question were supposed to be carrying out a dry run).

Lastly, said Hurd, the Home Office had conducted a review of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act last year, and had sought the views of the legal profession on the operation of the provisions governing access to solicitors. "The response indicated a general belief that these provisions are operating satisfactorily". This is the most outrageous comment of all: far from being "satisfactory", the widespread denial of suspects' rights to legal advice has been a source of nagging tension between the police, Law Society and Home Office ever since Broadwater. In December it spawned an important High Court case, in which the judge ruled that the police had to give *specific* reasons for denying access to *particular* lawyers.

Sooner or later, Hurd will lose his judicial figleaf: it will be interesting to see what he says then. If it comes in time for the 40th anniversary celebrations of the UN Delegation of Human Rights, we can all savour the ironies. □

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DIARY

"Ladies and gentlemen," squawks the Tannoy at Dillons' bookshop in Oxford. "John Stalker is on the ground floor!" And there he is slightly balder in the flesh than in the photos, signing books by the dozen.

"Hello, m'love," he greets a young woman customer, "let me shake you by the hand first before I sign your book. Now, what shall I put? Siobhan, that's S-i-o-b-h-a-n is it?" Next, please. A man with a grey beard strides briskly up to the desk and announces "It's a great pleasure having this book signed by you, Mr Stalker. Thank you, Mr Stalker." "I hope you enjoy the book," Stalker replies. "At the end of the day if it helps to give you a clearer view of my perspective, that's good — but the important thing is to enjoy it." Another satisfied customer beams with pleasure. One man has driven all the way from Wiltshire just to have his copy signed; he turns out to be a police constable. "I've only got 10 years to go till my pension," he tells me. "I'm happier as a PC. You don't have the hassle the guv'nors have. I mean, look at what happened to Stalker."

Two men from Harrap, the publisher, then hose me down with statistics: 75,000 hardback copies sold within a week and a half of publication; into its seventh — or is it eighth? — printing already; a two-week "major publicity tour" with 140 interviews and 28 signing sessions; 8,000 books signed by the man himself ("the coup is to find an unsigned copy, ha ha"); 3,000 miles travelled in a fortnight . . . No wonder the Honest Cop is beginning to sound slightly weary. "After this I want to withdraw gracefully and get on with doing other things," he sighs. "It's been a long haul."

○

And what of Stalker's arch enemy and obstructor, Sir John Hermon of the Royal Ulster Constabulary? He is not without his supporters. Chief groupie is Bruce Anderson, an extreme right-winger who used to work for Conservative Central Office and is now assistant editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*. After a rather desperate character-assassination of Stalker a couple of weeks ago, Anderson returned to the fray last weekend with a report that Hermon has "told friends" that Stalker was an inexperienced pussyfooter. Hermon "dismissed with contempt" the claim (in Stalker's book) that he had produced a Stalker "family tree" on the back of a cigarette packet which showed he knew Stalker's mother to be a Catholic. "I was completely uninterested in his religious beliefs," Sir John told the same friends. To suggest otherwise was "a lie and an insult".

Well, Hermon has a perfectly simple remedy available: he should sue for libel. Either the business with the cigarette packet happened or it didn't. The difference in the two men's accounts can't be attributed to lapse of memory: one wouldn't forget such an odd incident. So it seems that either Stalker is lying or Hermon is. If Hermon sues, a jury can decide. If Hermon doesn't sue, after all his whingeing and growling I think we can draw our own conclusions.

As Suzanne Moore pointed out in last week's *NS*, the message that sex can still be enjoyed has been absent from much official advertising about Aids. And the new "heterosexual" commercial made for TV and cinema is no exception. A man and woman are lolling in post-prandial languor. All we see of him is his eye, in close-up, watching. Of her we see plenty: the camera ogles her mini-skirted rump, lingers on the seams of her tights and then peers down her shirt to gawp at her cleavage. "It's quite late," she murmurs with a smile, stroking her thigh. "Will you stay?" Suddenly the man appears for the first time, frowning furiously as he wrestles with the difficult choice. "Aids," a caption lectures us. "You know the risks. The decision is yours." The implication is that he should say no. The man, through whose eyes we see, is an innocent victim being lured to his doom by a seductress who will infect him just as soon as she can get his pants off. With a film like *Fatal Attraction* there's little one can do to stop such a picture of women and sex; but this commercial is promoted by the government and financed by £4 million of public money. Why?

○

Last weekend's "Fabian school" in Edinburgh was beset with problems — not least of which was that one of the main speakers, Labour frontbencher Gordon Brown, refused to appear on the same platform as the other main speaker, Ken Livingstone. But in the end the question didn't arise: the event was cancelled for lack of interest. Fewer than 20 people had applied to come. "We could probably have scraped through with 20 or 25," Peter Taylor of the Scottish Fabians tells me morosely, "though for a successful weekend you really need 30 or more." The school was to have discussed the North-South divide, the economy, nationalism and regional government. "I suppose it was a kind of abstract subject," Taylor shrugs.

○

In the name of God go! Why do people cling to office long after they've outstayed their welcome? I'm thinking not of Sir John Hermon and Kurt Waldheim but of George Galloway MP, the Cheeky Chappie, whose local Labour party in Hillhead passed a motion of no confidence in him this week. (It was a consequence of the affair of the stolen letter, revealed in this column last month.) Men like Waldheim tend to claim that their detractors are "a small minority". This path is not open to George. So, instead, he says he won't stand down because his critics are "a small majority". Er, quite.

○

In the late Sixties Peter Fuller was a man of the barricades. He went on to be news editor of the radical paper *Seven Days*. He made a name for himself as a left-wing art critic thanks to the help of his mentor John Berger, who found him a slot in *New Society*. Now he seems to have decided to imitate the main character in David Edgar's *Maydays*, who betrays all his ideals and at least one of his friends. He has denounced Berger, incredibly, as a Thatcherite. He has revealed, equally incredibly, that the true socialist art critic of our time was Lord Clark of Civilisation. He has just founded an expensive magazine called *Modern Painters*, in which he is pleased to publish the thoughts of Roger Scruton and Lord Gowrie. He spends his time consorting with the High and Mighty. The New Right has clasped him to its breast. His apotheosis was reached last week at the party to celebrate the opening of the David Bomberg exhibition in London. As guests were arriving, a huge limousine pulled up outside the Tate. The chauffeur opened the door and out stepped the former news editor of *Seven Days*. Paul Johnson would be proud of him.

○

A by-election took place a few miles down the road from me last week in the Hardwick ward of Cherwell District Council. The SDP had won the seat with 752 votes in May 1987, but this time it came bottom of the poll with a grand total of 150 — an astonishing fall of 80 per cent in nine months. Jolly though this is, perhaps one shouldn't try to translate it into a national trend. There was a local factor: last year's successful SocDem candidate, Peter Gray, attended just one council meeting before disappearing off the face of the earth. All efforts by party officials to trace him since then have been unsuccessful.

Francis Wheen

ROGER WODDIS

Innocent as charged

Asked in a television interview whether public confidence in the law is more important than one or two innocent individuals, Lord Denning said, 'Certainly. The integrity of our system and upholding it is one of the foundations of society.'

The former Master of the Rolls,
Whose hallowed head is filled with holes
Through which the winds of wisdom blow
To dignify the status quo,
Believes that what upholds the law
Is justice red in tooth and claw.
The blameless and misunderstood
Must suffer for the greater good,
Which is to serve the highly-placed
On whom society is based.

To question what has been laid down
As holy writ by God and Crown
Is to suggest the stupid strong
Have never, ever got it wrong.
We might regard their grave *verb. sap.*
As so much legalistic crap,
And, what is worse, not give a fig
For any clown who wears a wig;
And once we dare to doubt Lord D.,
Then God knows what the end will be!

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Two cheers for Bukharin

THE SOVIET authorities take their revolutionary heroes seriously. Icons were Russia's greatest art form until Pushkin's time, and icons are what historians are expected to turn out now: solemn images of Lenin and OK Leninists. This month, for instance, has been the time for remembering the 110th anniversary of the birth of Grigori Petrovsky. Who he? He was a Bolshevik worker elected to the Tsarist parliament in 1912, for which he merits a quarter-page article in *Pravda*, and a day-long "ceremonial conference" at Moscow's Institute of Marxism-Leninism.

But what will historians do this August, confronted by the centenary of Nikolai Bukharin, who, in reality, was like an adopted son to Lenin, but who was officially, until a mere three years ago, a convicted terrorist and Nazi spy?

The "rehabilitation" of Bukharin was slightly overwritten in Britain's press. The USSR Supreme Court did, for a group of ten defendants at a show trial held in Moscow 50 years ago, what our own appeal court failed to do in the case of the Birmingham Six: having established that illegal methods were used to force them to confess, the court overturned the verdict. Thus Bukharin and others — including Khristian Rakovsky, who was Trotsky's closest friend and ally — are cleared of all criminal charges.

While a high-level commission deliberates over Bukharin's exact status in Soviet history, Gorbachev has already indicated where he stands. He wants Bukharin to be given credit for helping to defeat Trotsky in the late 1920s, and for giving a clear, unheeded warning of the threat from Nazi Germany, but not for opposing Stalin's brutal campaign to end private trade and private farming during the first five-year plan.

There are intellectuals who see Bukharin as an early champion of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. But the thought that weighs heavily in the General Secretary's mind is that this is not a simple choice between historical personalities; the party leadership of that time were free to support either Stalin's policies, or Bukharin's, and clearly chose the former. To believe — as some Soviet intellectuals certainly do — that Bukharin was right all along is to suggest that the Communist Party as a whole committed a disastrous and irreversible blunder. That goes beyond the limits of *glasnost*.

Even so, Nikolai Bukharin's reappearance in Soviet history has more than an academic importance. It must be some consolation to his widow and two surviving children after what they have suffered in their lives. More than that, it could reintroduce into Soviet political culture the idea that a party member can honestly disagree with the prevailing party line, go down into defeat, and still be a good communist. If the next barrier is breached, and Bukharin's works are published, if he is allowed, as it were, to express his opposition to the party line from beyond the grave, then perhaps the same privilege could be granted to a living critic of current policies, like Boris Yeltsin.

Andy McSmith

Murderer back in uniform

IN NORTHERN IRELAND, disbelief and disgust have greeted news that in spite of over 160 killings of innocent civilians, the only uniformed British soldier ever convicted of murder is not only walking free three years after being sentenced to life imprisonment — but is also back serving in the British Army.

The incident goes back to August 1983 when a group of seven or eight young Belfastmen were sunbathing in the Whiterock, Catholic area of the city. One of them was Thomas Reilly, nicknamed "Kidso" and a roadie with the pop group Bananarama. He was back home for a holiday.

A community worker, Kieron de Baroid, had gone outside the Springfield Resource Centre to tell off some young kids in the road and saw the whole incident. "One of the soldiers said something to Kidso. He replied 'You won't call me an Irish bastard,' and hit the soldier."

"Kidso was clubbed with rifle butts. A friend, Emmanuel Cruthers, who intervened, had his face split open, there was blood everywhere. Kidso saw that a serious fight was beginning, got up and ran off round the corner.

"A soldier ran after him, took aim, moved a little to get better aim and fired a single shot. Kidso had been sunbathing and was bare-chested. There could be no mistake that he was running away.

"He was dead before he hit the ground." One of the soldiers putting up tape around the incident scene told de Baroid: "That's one Irish bastard less." The funeral was huge — most press attention centred on the attendance of members of Bananarama. Two weeks of rioting followed, so great was the fury in West Belfast.

Private Ian Richard Thain, 18 at the time and a member of the First Battalion the Light Infantry, said at the trial that he was scared for his life.

He was convicted of murder and sentenced to life. Unlike Irish prisoners who are denied the right to choose to serve their sentences at home, Private Thain was transferred to England to serve his sentence. Two Irish men have died on hunger strike for this right — Michael Gaughan and Frank Stagg in the 1970s. It was for this right that the Price sisters also nearly died and were force fed before eventually being repatriated in the 1970s.

Private Thain's life sentence lasted three years. He was quietly released on parole last year. He is now back in uniform and although not now serving in Northern Ireland, could well do so if his battalion is transferred there.

Kidso Reilly's family and friends are deeply shocked. The community in West Belfast is "disgusted but not surprised", according to Kieron de Baroid.

It now seems that, irrespective of the results of the inquiry following last weekend's fatal shooting of Aidan McAnespie at Aughnacloy, the individual responsible will not be incarcerated for long.

Anne Cadwallader

New Statesman merger plans

THE STATESMAN & Nation Publishing Company and the Rowntree Trust, who are joint owners of *New Society*, have agreed in principle to bring about a merger between the *New Statesman* and *New Society* magazines, and to launch the merged publication with a substantial new investment in which Rowntree would be the largest single contributor.

Phillip Whitehead, chair of Statesman & Nation Publishing Company, put out a statement this week in which he said: "A merged publication with much greater pagination, and an increased promotion and editorial budget, would not only combine the best features of the two magazines but would be better than the sum of their parts, with a readership to match. It is the best hope we have for an informed and authoritative magazine covering political and social issues in Britain today."

The *New Statesman* will be able to publish a fuller account of the proposals for the magazines next week. The magazine's editorial independence will not be prejudiced by the proposed merger, which will be discussed with the staffs and contributors of both the *New Statesman* and *New Society*, We would be pleased to receive the views and questions of our readers about the proposal.

Stuart Weir

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No conscience, please — you're a soldier

A 29-YEAR-OLD Greek soldier lost his appeal against a conviction for disobedience last week, in a test case brought to challenge the fact that there is no provision for conscientious objectors to national service in Greek law.

As far as the military appeal court in Athens was concerned, Michalis Maragakis could not refuse to become a soldier — no such possibility exists in Greek law. He already *was* a soldier and his refusal to serve rendered him guilty of disobedience. But the appeal court did cut his sentence, from four years to two years and two months.

His lawyers — who called international witnesses including Dutch Euro-MP Bram van der Lek, and former Italian general Ambrogio Viviani — argued that the European Convention on Human Rights, and the Greek constitution, rendered his trial in a military court invalid. But the five military judges rejected this argument. A French lawyer attended the trial on behalf of Amnesty International, with a view to adopting Maragakis as a prisoner of conscience.

Maragakis is the first politically motivated pacifist to resist conscription in Greece. Earlier objectors have all been Jehovah's Witnesses; under the previous Greek constitution, some of these were simply re-arrested, re-tried, and re-imprisoned each time they came out of gaol.

Maragakis's lawyers now intend to appeal to the Greek Supreme Court in an attempt to challenge the right of military courts to hear the case. Meanwhile, a second challenge to the law is about to be mounted; on the day that Maragakis appeared in court, a leading member of his defence committee, who has already decided to resist his recent call-up for national service, received a summons to appear at a military base to face similar charges.

Albert Beale

SA treason trial breaks new ground

Johannesburg

A MAJOR POLITICAL trial is getting underway in South Africa this month. In the dock is Moses Mayekiso, the General Secretary of the country's powerful metal workers' union. He and four co-accused are charged with high treason.

According to the indictment, the accused conspired to make the township of Alexandra ungovernable. They are alleged to have replaced the crumbling institutions of municipal, judicial and police authority with organs of self-government or "people's power". The state will attempt to show that the accused organised township residents into street committees, set up people's courts, and formed groups of youths or "comrades" to maintain order.

Alexandra is a ghetto of overcrowded houses and tin shacks in the middle of the most affluent white suburbs of Johannesburg. The township has a long history of struggle dating back to the days when the ANC was legal. The most recent round of resistance peaked in the first half of 1986, when police fought with youths for control of the township. Some 46 blacks were killed and at least 300 wounded in one especially bloody incident known as the "six day war". The youths were only defeated when the army occupied Alexandra and detained hundreds of residents following the declaration of a national state of emergency in June 1986. Mayekiso has been in gaol ever since.

The Mayekiso treason trial marks an important shift by the government. Until now treason trials have focused on state allegations of grand conspiracies inspired and directed by the ANC and the South African Communist Party. The Mayekiso trial is concerned with day-to-day political activity.

If the accused are convicted it could set a precedent for many previously legal anti-government activities to be declared treasonable. Campaigning against the town council, organising rent and consumer boycotts, even just changing the existing names of streets: all are cited as evidence of treason.

It is also unusual to find a prominent trade union leader facing charges of treason. The 130,000-strong metal workers' union is second only to the miners in power and importance.

Many of the few who manage to find work around Alexandra belong to the union. In the past there had been some tension between union and community activists. Community leaders complained that by focussing on long-term socialist goals, unionists did not pay sufficient attention to the immediate need to mobilise people for the national liberation struggle. By bridging union and community politics Mayekiso has become an important political symbol.

Three international campaigns have been launched to free Mayekiso. Both the United Auto Workers union in the United States and the European-based International Metalworkers' Federation have taken up the issue. In Britain a "Friends of Mayekiso" group has been formed to focus attention on the trial and a peer, Lord Hooson, has flown to South Africa to observe proceedings.

Judicial independence has almost disappeared in South Africa. It is thought, however, that Mayekiso's judge is concerned about his overseas image. Since the state seems to have very little evidence to back its case, defence lawyers are quietly hopeful of getting the accused acquitted, but only if international pressure is maintained.

Andrew Gandell

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Impatient patients

JULIA SCHOFIELD, a 36-year-old playwright and occasional scriptwriter for *EastEnders*, owes her life to the NHS. She was born with a hiatus hernia, and was the first baby to undergo a successful operation for the condition.

This week Schofield's pressure group, Hospital Alert, has organised a mass lobby of parliament to ask for more funds to be put into the NHS — an extra £2.5 billion in next month's budget. Schofield founded the organisation after waiting more than six months for a routine operation, and is about to launch it as the first national patients' lobby group.

Hospital Alert was set up 18 months ago in a local newspaper office which was filled to bursting with an angry crowd of neglected patients. Letters and complaints have poured in, highlighting cases like that of an 89-year-old blind woman who on four separate occasions was left waiting in her flat in her hat and coat for an ambulance which never arrived.

Schofield says it is the swell of public opinion

If the caption fits

No 56

Mrs Thatcher occasionally takes time off from being the PM and sees what it's like being an ordinary person going about their daily life — doing the washing up, perhaps, getting their husband's supper, even meeting the MP for Finchley. Tell us what either of the dummies is thinking on a postcard, please, by Monday 7 March. Ten-pound book token for the winner.

Winner: No 44

Hattersley: "Live and let live, I say, Tony. I'm a non-smoker myself." (*Sara Spain, London.*)
Runner up: Hattersley: "Come on Tony, do your Harold Wilson. They love your Harold Wilson . . . " (*John Langridge, Liverpool.*)

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that the group tapped into that has pushed Hospital Alert from a local community group based in Twickenham to a national organisation. In December, the group organised the highly publicised consultants' petition to Downing Street; in just five weeks they collected 1,255 signatures. "Consultants had been protesting to ministers privately for three years, but the public just didn't know," Schofield says.

The existing watchdogs, the community health councils, have no brief to create publicity and galvanise public opinion, she believes. "After the consultants' petition, people begged us to do something more," she says. The result is this week's lobby of parliament, which has been organised by 160 co-ordinators all over the country. "Our main aim is to ensure that health authorities cannot make further cuts without the public knowing, and if they know they are then in a position to fight."

Charlotte Rastan

Hospital Alert can be contacted at 26 Orleans Road, Twickenham, Middlesex TW1 3BL (01-892 1787).

NEW STATESMAN/ LSE DEBATE

"The free market is the prison of the poor"

Roy Hattersley (Deputy Leader, Labour Party)

vs

Professor Kenneth Minogue (Professor of Government, LSE)

John Lloyd (*Financial Times*)

vs

Bruce Anderson (*Sunday Telegraph*)

Tuesday, 1 March, 7.30pm London School of Economics, Houghton Street, Aldwych, London WC2

Admission Free

POLITICAL SKETCH

Black Holes and Ham-Slicers

Edward Pearce

AT FIRST SIGHT there is a strong element of *dèja vu* about a guillotine bill, and to have Michael Foot denouncing John Wakeham for the latest outrage may seem to some like Landru deploring Crippen. However, as we go, very early in the year, to a systematic, structured timetable bill to accommodate the poll tax, it may be worth wondering if there is not something altogether more menacing about the proposal.

More of that in a moment, but the actual debate had its desultory charms, not the least of which was to see Bruce Grocott at the despatch box applauding Mr Ridley's little dragon as the best thing available for the good health of marginal men in the Labour interest. He spoke from the heart, having spent the last 15 years in a state of yo-yo resurrection, periodically sleeping in his cave beneath the Wrekin waiting for Roland's horn to recall him to battle, alternatively trembling at the eroded rim of a majority measured in hundreds. To him the notion of the self-employed electrician who has bought his council house in Wellington and voted Tory for the first time in 1983, suddenly receiving a solicitous demand for the community charge payable on Terry, 20 and Cheryl, 18, is heavy with Grocott-friendly potential. You could say that so deeply is he into the electoral advantages of Mr Ridley's correct line that his heart wasn't in any deep opposition to the guillotine.

This will never be true of Michael Foot. Despite a long and bloody record as *Monsieur de Londres*, to follow French usage on the titles of executioners, he was quite willing to distinguish *this* bill from the many which had passed through his hands. *This* was happening in February, *his* in July. *He* had been faced with bills failing to become law and had, very late in the day, imposed guillotines to see them through. Just why are we having a guillotine in February? Is it merely John Wakeham's administrative cast of mind wanting to run the ham through the slicer all at once in the hope of thereby obtaining slices of uniform succulence? Is it therefore mere good grocership?

Put like this, and in his mind-detaching, laborious, barrel-trundling way, Wakeham put it just like that — "Look how reasonable I'm being, four extra days, no chance of anything being missed, much more tidy" — who but wild haired Scythian romantics like Michael Foot, fond of late nights and learned arguments, could object? The thought occurs that Mr Wakeham, like almost everybody important these days, is an accountant and that what accountants have done to newspapers they will duly do to the Commons.

HOWEVER, IT MAY be more significant than that. The early guillotine guarantees coherent, balanced consideration of all essential clauses in the bill. All provisions will be discussed in a desultory fashion, much as all the slices of a loaf of Mother's Pride may receive an individual film of margarine. In the old disordered days, the slices of legislation would be buttered two inches thick at one end and be dry bread at the other. Most messy and unaccountantlike, but politically absolutely right.

For what is discussed in the Commons is discussed on whips' orders and, where required, can be minutely as the government wants it. What gets discussed in the Lords is subject to all sorts of unpredictable democratic impulses. For, as Machiavelli perceived, the inducement of preferment anticipated greatly outweighs that of preferment appreciated. Gratitude doesn't work.

Now legislation which received only lopsided attention in the Commons receives detailed perusal in the Lords. But if all bills are neatly processed, their Lordships will lack that comfortable handle of omission which they are so good at grasping and turning. A Commons transformed into an efficient ham-slicer should not rejoice. Its one weapon, delay (of which dedicated windbagging in committee was a constituent part), will have gone.

This, I must make clear, is not my own reasoning, but derives from my colleague, Godfrey Barker of the *Daily Telegraph*, who maintains a sharp two-eyed vision of Commons and Lords in tandem and who, like the rest of us, has rejoiced in the independence and quality of the revived Upper House. But if the idea didn't occur to *me*, did it occur to Mr Wakeham? Or is Godfrey thinking too deeply and mistaking advanced grocery for profound executive scheming?

Whatever the answer, John Biffen used this debate skilfully to promote his creative loyalty to the government. He coolly informed Mr Ridley that his flagship was of such construction that he might find himself on the bridge of the Titanic. There is very little doubt of the North Shropshire view of the poll tax. It is the mirror image of the mid-Shropshire, or Grocott, view. Wem sees a disaster for the Tories for much the same reasons as Admaston, and with a touch of the same twisted satisfaction. He is also happy to unroll another section of the magnificent polyptych of oppositionist, social monetarist ideas which will in due course constitute *le defie Biffenique*. He favours, as one part of this alternative manifesto, that the poll tax, having been visited upon us, should be prevented from clubbing unprosperous people like nurses in hospitals or the children in households short of work, by the straightforward device of being graduated.

Whether or not such a notion has any prospects in the Lords, since this is after all not a money bill, who can say? But it is the sort of Lords Amendment to send back to a bloodshot report stage, Prime Ministerial plate-smashing and general incandescence. It is so obviously the sensible way out of a black and bottomless hole that it may be taken up by the more advanced Conservatives. This may be their hole, but no one can say that they cherish it. □

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The new adult training scheme

THE RATIONALE behind the government's new adult training programme is sound. Up till now, the only scheme of any size for long-term unemployed people has been the Community Programme with 224,000 places. The programme has provided work, often interesting and useful, but has not in general attempted to improve the skills of its participants. With Britain's construction and engineering industries, among others, complaining of unprecedented skills shortages and evidence that one in four long-term unemployed people has literacy and numeracy problems while more than half have no qualifications, the need for training is self-evident.

The new scheme may, however, be doomed to failure like its predecessor, the Job Training Scheme, for several reasons — all of which the government could resolve if it chose to do so.

The new scheme will provide an average of six months training for 600,000 trainees a year. The programme will be full-time, with trainees spending 60 per cent of their time on the job and 40 per cent on "directed training" (much of it of a correspondence course or self-administered work sheet variety). Participants will be paid an allowance, equivalent to their previous level of benefit, plus a small premium towards work expenses, and some travel costs.

The new scheme is grossly underfunded. No funds will be made available over and above the £1.5 billion cost of the current Community Programme and other smaller schemes. The emphasis will inevitably be upon the most basic of skills — including job search skills and the development of motivation and personal effectiveness — with few resources available for college based vocational skills training.

A second problem, closely related to the first, is the level of pay for trainees and the replacement of the rate-for-the-job principle. Norman Fowler has argued for "benefit plus", on the grounds that the Community Programme did not attract people with family responsibilities due to the low average level of pay (£67 per week). While accepting the need to open up the programme to people with family responsibilities, critics of the new scheme argue that "benefit plus", particularly at the levels established, will bring with it a host of new problems. There will be no financial incentives to attend and, if the quality of training is as poor as expected and the experience unlikely to lead to work, no incentive to attend at all.

Trainees may work alongside regular employees on rates of pay below their training allowance, maybe threatening industrial relations. They will have neither the status of an employee, nor in most cases that of a trainee.

Clause 26 of the 1987 Employment Bill enables benefit officers to withdraw benefit from those who fail to comply with a referral to a place on an MSC programme. Norman Fowler, when questioned by the Opposition about the application of Clause 26 to the new training scheme, was non-committal. But his intentions are all too clear, despite public assurances that the scheme will be voluntary.

In a full employment context there would be no need for schemes based on coercion and threats of benefit withdrawal. Last week the Campaign for Work invited Mrs Thalen, Sweden's Minister for Labour, to London to explain how Sweden has maintained full employment (less than 3 per cent unemployed) throughout the 1980s, while controlling inflation and maintaining a growth rate equal to the average in the UK.

The essential difference between Sweden and the UK has been Sweden's commitment to full employment as an objective of equal importance to the control of inflation. To that end, 2 per cent of its GNP has been devoted to employment subsidies, job creation, and good quality training.

Norman Fowler visited Sweden recently and was, we understand, impressed. Perhaps Nigel Lawson should be Stockholm's next visitor before putting the finishing touches to his budget. Even at this late stage he could abandon his plans to waste £3 billion on tax cuts and grasp the opportunity to put Britain back to work through a really effective, high quality training scheme supplemented with investment in the health service, schools and homes to create work.

Molly Meacher

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BEN PIMLOTT

Can Labour become the party of modernisation?

ONE OF THE Opposition's biggest problems has been its conservatism. Under constant attack for its supposedly "extreme" positions, Labour's reality has been a desperate defence of ancient, ragged ramparts with quaint old-fashioned names: "nationalisation", "planned economy". Bold, imaginative thrusts have been the hallmark of the Tories. This was particularly true at the last election, when poor old chastened Labour offered nothing more frightening than an increase in public expenditure, while the Conservatives put forward a series of wild proposals which a few years ago would have been regarded as absurdly utopian even by the loony right.

Today, the difficulty is as great as ever. As Mrs Thatcher continues her demolition of everything the left and centre hold sacred, Labour faces the dilemma: should it be the party that defends the status quo? Or should it promise to turn the clock back, and become the party of reaction? The apparently impossible psychological leap is to become *even more radical than the Conservatives*. The official word on this is that the voters would not like it.

Hence Mrs Thatcher's uncharacteristic caution on civil service reform ought to be seized by the Labour leadership with a great whoop of joy. Here, at last, is the chance to o'er-leap the government, and become the party of modernisation, instead of fuddy-duddyism. The question is, will it have the nerve to take it?

Certainly the Prime Minister seemed to lose hers. First came the blood-curdling leaks of her own Efficiency Unit's report, prepared by a team led by the Unit's head, Sir Robin Ibbs *(Improving Management In Government: The Next Steps* HMSO £3.90). Then came the report itself, and the bland announcement that while the government was embracing it in principle, in practice only a tiny bit is likely to be carried out.

True, the key concept of devolving executive functions of the civil service to "agencies" under contracted managers has been retained — but it is only to be applied, for the time being, to also-ran sections of the government machine. Big, important, politically sensitive areas of government like the DHSS social security services, the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise are to be excluded. More important, even where the new system is to be applied, its practical impact on the distribution of power will be slight. The essence of the agency idea is to give managers the freedom to manage. That is to be aborted. Budgets, manpower, pay will stay in the hands of Treasury nannies. Ministerial responsibility for what goes on in the agencies will remain as before. In short, what had been billed as the biggest Whitehall shake-up for more than a century, has been delivered as a classic piece of mandarin card-shuffling.

Why did Mrs Thatcher duck the opportunity to become a major reformer of Whitehall? The first holder of her office since Lord Home who has never been a civil servant, she has shown none of the reverence for the mandarin caste that typified the Wilson-Heath-Callaghan years. Arguably, indeed — from her interventions in permanent secretary appointments, to the cost-consciousness-raising Financial Management Initiative and the extension of the "open structure" down to principal level — she has taken a more sustained, and critical, interest in the civil service than any predecessor since the war.

Her current reticence is therefore surprising. The explanation seems to be that the Treasury convinced her that go-it-alone agencies would generate high costs of their own which, without adequate control, might negate the cost-cutting object of the exercise; above all (and this has always been the mandarins' trump) that any dispersal of power within the public service would reduce the direct authority of the Prime Minister herself.

The result has been to leave the Opposition in a state of bemusement; unsure whether to express relief or suspicion. Along with the civil service unions, it is behaving rather like the man who is rung up and told that his car has been stolen and written off in a smash; and who, on arriving at the garage, finds only that the paintwork has been scratched. They are cross, but only in the somewhat unconvincing manner of people who had expected something much worse.

Yet this is an inappropriate response. There is, of course, the natural concern of civil servants about pay, location of employment and conditions — about which the position is as yet unclear. Otherwise, however, it is far from certain that there is anything in principle to attack. Indeed, the sensible reaction may not be to complain about the damp squib that has just been let off, but to express disappointment at the lack of a proper fireworks display. It would certainly be wrong to present the Ibbs report as a negative document. Though suitably peppered with Tory buzz phrases, and dutifully worshipping the deity called "value for money", it is lucid and well-considered, and based on wide soundings.

The problems it addresses are real ones. The civil service has long contained the contradiction (which Labour's own Fulton Report highlighted a generation ago) that senior management is, in the words of the report, "dominated by people whose skills are in policy formulation and who have relatively little experience of managing or working where services are actually being delivered". One does not need to fetishise business-style management to see that the nurturing of a new breed of accountable, professional civil service managers has much to recommend it.

But the new approach would only work efficiently on the basis of a major constitutional change. According to Ibbs:

> We believe it is possible for Parliament, through Ministers, to regard managers as directly responsible for operational matters . . . to achieve changes in the arrangements for formal accountability would generally require legislation and . . . in suitable cases this should be considered.

In other words, the semi-fiction that ministers are responsible for everything that happens within their sphere ought to end, and managers should be given full responsibility instead. According to Ibbs, if management is to be improved, this cannot be ignored. But the Prime Minister has chosen to ignore it, opting for a system that may not, in practice, differ greatly from the present one.

So what should Labour do? One interesting practice might be to champion the Ibbs proposals. Another might be to go beyond them, and suggest that they do not go far enough. As yet, Labour has no policy of its own on the civil service. The Policy Review has not considered the machinery of government at all, and has no present plans to do so.

To call this extraordinary is an understatement. Even the much-maligned 1964 government took the civil service issue seriously. The Wilson administration's Fulton Report was a product of Labour's efficiency-minded, meritocratic ethic which, like so much else, burnt out in the white-hot heat of the 1967 devaluation. Fulton's modest proposals were only half-heartedly pursued. Yet the proposition that a progressive revolution requires a streamlined machine remains as valid today as 20 years ago.

Labour's recent indifference to the subject does, however, mean that it can now approach it unencumbered. It should do so by adapting the Ibbs approach to a socialist model, on Swedish lines. In Sweden, ministries are small, policy-making bodies, and executive functions are hived off to boards on which a range of interests (unions, employers, and so on) are represented. As in the Ibbs scheme, there is no accountability of these boards' employees to ministers or Parliament. But — and it is a vital but — there is an effective system of administrative law, with special tribunals and an interventionist ombudsman, to ensure that the public interest is served. At the same time, officials are directly answerable to the public, and an American-style freedom-of-information law provides public access to their reports and deliberations.

There are not many votes to be gained, or lost, by civil service reform. But socialist revolutions are not just about votes. If Labour really intends to be radical again in its social and economic policies, a glance across the North Sea at a devolved, smooth-running, well-regulated administrative system would be a helpful starting-point. □

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Ten ways to shake the tax world

Nigel Lawson wants to go down in history as a reforming Chancellor. Press leaks inspired by the Exchequer aren't auspicious. If it's not too late,* JOHN HILLS *lights up the way to Damascus

THIS IS, we are told, Mr Nigel Lawson's big chance to secure a place in history before the City lures him to a world free from worries about the tax system — indeed, often profitably free from worries about tax at all, thanks to some concessions in the last few years.

Pre-budget speculation suggests that "tax reform" is the route to this immortality, the way larded by the revenue surplus accrued by pretending that the Treasury's cupboard was bare when the public spending plans were decided last autumn. This pretence has now been abandoned, but a new convention has been invented: governments don't talk about public spending in months which do not end in "ber", so that the surplus "has to be" spent on tax cuts.

We are told to expect 2p off the basic rate combined with cuts in the higher rates of income tax. This is being marketed as "reform". The *Daily Mail* might think that such handouts constitute reform, but the Chancellor and those who will judge him in the economic history books know better than that. The speculation also ignores his reputation for surprise. Accordingly, I suggest that Mr Lawson makes his bid to go down in history as the Man Who Admitted It Had All Been A Ghastly Mistake.

He could start by reminding the country that the justification given for the cuts and petty meannesses of the last eight years has always been that times were hard. The nation simply could not afford to keep up the value of the state pension with the rise in overall living standards, or fund hospitals adequately, or maintain the real value of child benefit, or buy enough books for schools and public libraries. If times are at last no longer hard, the same logic dictates that reversing the spending cuts must be the first priority over tax cuts.

The second part of this recantation would be to admit that it had been wrong to increase the tax burden on those with average or low incomes while reducing it for those well above the average at a time when — under the encouraging banner of creating an "enterprise culture"— the inequality of pre-tax incomes has widened sharply. Correction of this could form the focus of a genuine tax reform, at the same time producing a tax structure which was fairer, more rational and incorporated fewer distortions in its treatment of different kinds of economic activity.

Here, then, are the ten ingredients of a package which really would go down in history.

1. *Reform National Insurance contributions.* Reforming the structure of the National Insurance contributions paid by employees demands the most rapid attention in cutting taxes on the low paid and producing a more rational direct tax structure. By the time earnings reach £100 a week, NI contributions are charged at the full 9 per cent (for those not contracted out of the state earnings-related pension scheme) on *all* earnings. Unlike income tax, there is no untaxed allowance to ensure that the proportion of income taken in tax rises for the better off; it just sticks at 9 per cent until earnings reach £295 a week — after which *no* extra contributions are payable and the proportion begins to *fall.*

The upper limit should be abolished and the lower limit (currently £39 a week) turned into an allowance, operating like those for income tax (perhaps aligned with the single allowance). NI contributions would then simply be a percentage of the excess of earnings over the allowance. Because everyone would benefit from the contribution-free allowance, a reforming chancellor could even push the rate up — collecting extra revenue overall to fund a higher level of pensions, for instance — while ensuring that the majority of the working population would still pay lower contributions than they do now.

2. *Abandon the long basic rate band.* Virtually everyone (95 per cent) who pays income tax does so at the basic rate, currently 27 per cent. It is true that a tax system with only one rate can be progressive, in the sense that tax rises as a proportion of income as income rises. There comes a point, however, above which the rises become trivial. With the current 27 per cent rate, a single person on £5,000 pays about 14 per cent of his or her income in income tax while the proportion rises to 20.5 per cent at £10,000. The tax-free allowance is relatively more important to the first than the second and the structure is progressive. However, someone on £20,000 loses only 23.7 per cent.

The argument for progressive taxation is that the rich can afford to spend a greater proportion of their income on tax than the poor. That argument sustains something far more than a three percentage point rise in the tax burden when income doubles.

The picture looks even worse when you allow for the effects of the upper limit for NI contributions and look at the total proportion of income taken by income tax and NI. A single person on £220 a week (roughly average male earnings) can actually pay a *higher* proportion of income tax in direct taxes than someone with twice the income!

The long basic rate should be broken up and a *graduated* structure introduced. There are any number of variations one could introduce, but a key element should be a rate lower than the existing basic rate for those *below* average earnings, financed by a higher rate for those *above.* This could cost the Exchequer nothing, while producing gains for the majority of the population.

3. *Leave the higher rates of tax alone.* There is not much point in pushing the top rate of income tax above the current 60 per cent (remembering that the NI contribution rate would apply to the rich, too, once the upper limit has been abolished). The main beneficiaries of higher marginal rates than this would be the tax avoidance industry.

Having agreed on a sensible upper limit for the very rich, Mr Lawson could then apply the same rule to the very poor. The new family credit and housing benefit arrangements, due from 1 April, will *double* the number of low-income families caught in the poverty trap (that is, of people who face a combined rate of tax and withdrawal of benefit of more than 70p in the £1). So significant changes to the social security system would be needed. If, as appears from press reports, Mr Lawson thinks that the maximum rate for the rich should be even lower, more far-reaching changes to social security would be needed. These would have to involve less reliance on means-testing and increases in benefits which depend on people's circumstances such as child benefit, unemployment benefit and the state pension.

4. *Restrict income tax allowances to the basic rate.* Rather than pushing up the top *rates* of tax, the key point in determining the tax liabilities of those on high incomes is where the *starting point* for the high rates comes. The higher rates currently start at 40 per cent on *taxable* income over £17,900. This could correspond to well over £25,000 of *gross*

Reforming Chancellor?

THIS IS the first article in a special *New Statesman* series on tax reform, which we'll be publishing in the weeks leading up to the budget on 15 March. We'll be challenging the orthodoxy that Lawson can only "reform" taxes by cutting them. The series will scrutinise the tax loopholes of the super-rich, how tax and benefits conspire to produce the poverty trap, and suggest how the Chancellor might spend the £4 billion he is rumoured to have up his sleeve. ●

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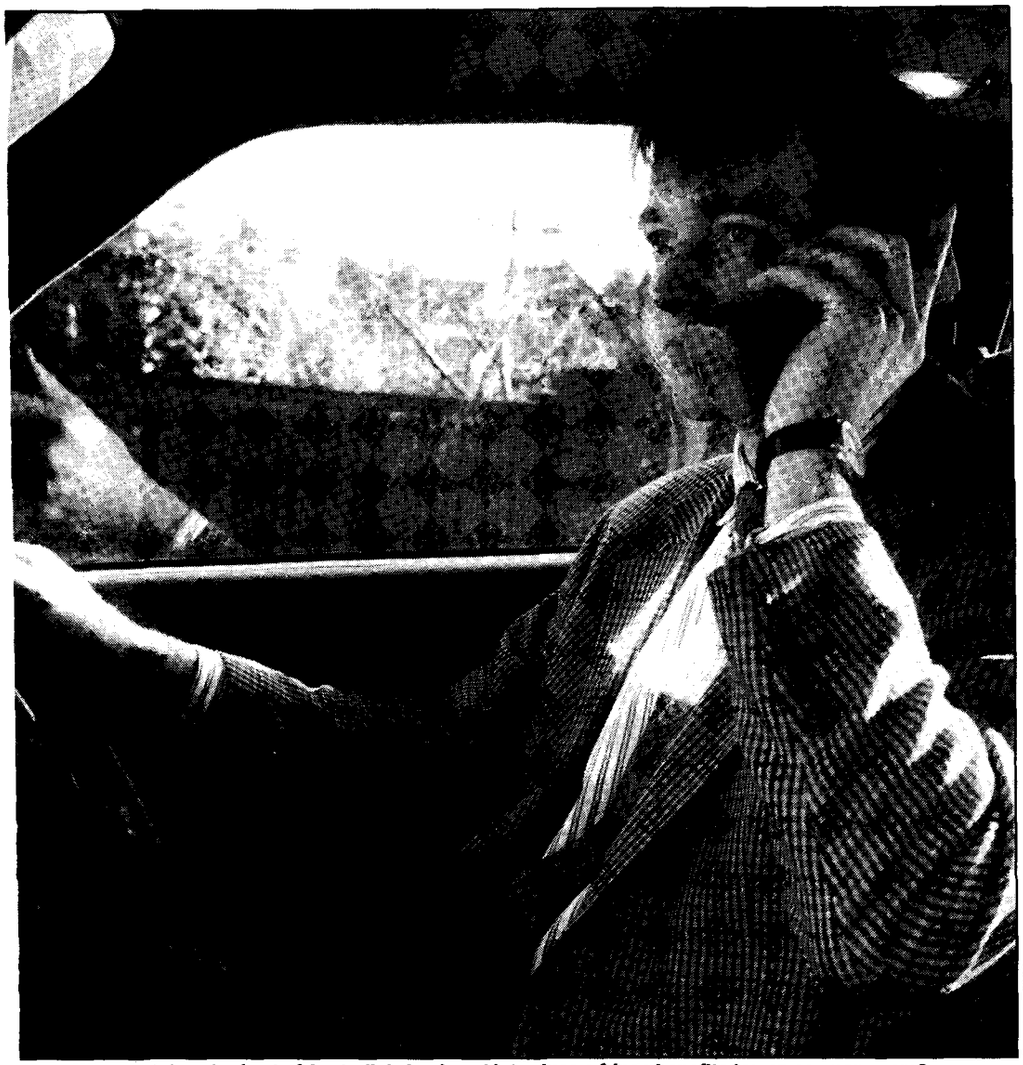

Camera Press

Why not take a leaf out of Australia's book and introduce a fringe benefits tax on company cars?

income for a married man with a £30,000 mortgage and a few other tax-deductible allowances. This is why fewer than 5 per cent of taxpayers currently pay tax at the higher rates.

The easiest way to do something about this would be to restrict all allowances so that they were only deductible at the basic rate. The higher rates really would then start at £17,900, which seems a not unreasonable feature of a graduated structure of the kind described above. The allowances would then be fairer: instead of being worth more than twice as much to those on the top rates as to virtually everyone else, they would be worth exactly the same to everybody.

With the abolition of higher-rate mortgage relief, all mortgage relief would go through the MIRAS (Mortgage Interest Relief at Source) arrangements, without the Inland Revenue having to have anything to do with it. It could even go into the Department of the Environment's budget and be left to fight for the £4.75 billion it costs — and for its unequal pattern of beneficiaries — with other items of housing expenditure.

5. *Introduce independent taxation of husband and wife.* A key element in Mr Lawson's historic reform would be the phasing out of the married man's tax allowance, effectively bringing in separate taxation of the earnings of husband and wife, while improving cash benefits like child benefit. The arguments for this — and against a move towards "transferable allowances" — are discussed by Susan Owen on page 12.

6. *Clamp down on fringe benefits.* With the effective value of relief on company cars alone costing £1 billion a year on Institute for Fiscal Studies figures, the government could take a leaf out of Australia's book and introduce a special fringe benefits tax on the companies which provide them. The effect of this in Australia has been that it is no longer worthwhile for companies to provide extensive benefits in kind. Instead, more and more of the benefits have been "cashed out". As a result the tax system is fairer, revenue is higher (or rates can be lower), and the tax system has less of an effect in favouring bizarre payment arrangements.

7. *Start to sort out the savings tax muddle.* The returns on different kinds of savings — or, more grandly, different forms of income from capital — are taxed in widely varying ways. At one end, dodges like the Business Expansion Scheme mean that the tax system greatly *adds* to the return received by high-income investors. At the other, interest on building society deposits is fully taxed (and without the benefit of an allowance for the effects of inflation of the kind given to those with capital gains).

A first step would be the abolition of loopholes like the Business Expansion Scheme and subsidies for planting trees in bits of Scotland that do not need them, combined with the phasing out of concessions like tax-free lump sums on retirement. A more general approach to the problem has been suggested by Professor Mervyn King, of the LSE. Under this, investment income would be taken out of the normal income tax system and taxed at a flat rate. At the same time, the exemption of pension fund income from taxation — one of the most expensive forms of favourable treatment at the moment — would be phased out. The result would be a system which minimised the ways in which taxation distorts decisions as to where to save and invest.

Under Professor King's scheme, the flat rate on investment income would be 25 per cent less than that paid by those with investment income now — much less for top-rate taxpayers — and less than the total of tax and NI contributions paid on earnings. There would, however, be nothing to stop a chancellor from introducing a similar system, but with a *higher* flat rate — say 35-40 per cent — which would raise more revenue and maintain progressivity. A flat rate on investment income would also remove some of the side-effects which would otherwise complicate the introduction of a graduated income tax structure and independent taxation of husband and wife.

8. *Start taxing capital gains properly.* The first £6,600 a year of someone's capital gains are free of tax, getting on for three times the tax-free allowance given to any other form of income. Tax only applies to *real* gains, with an allowance built in for the effect of inflation after 1982. As a result, a rich individual could have investments worth over £100,000, growing in nominal value by 10 per cent a year and *pay no tax whatsoever.* Even when tax is paid, the rate is 30 per cent — less than that at which most earnings are taxed, and offering a useful saving to top taxpayers who can alchemise their investment income into this form.

Complications in the calculation of capital gains rule out elimination of an allowance altogether, but setting it equal to the single tax allowance of £2,425 would be more than enough to protect small investors and low-yielding assessments. Having done that, the Chancellor could then follow President Reagan and include capital gains in the income-tax base, or alternatively tax capital gains at the same flat rate proposed above for other investment returns.

9. *Reintroduce a tax on inherited wealth.* The government has gradually whittled away what was once estate duty, these days known as "inheritance tax", until it becomes very hard to imagine how someone could be incompetent enough to pay it. In effect, Mr Lawson would be starting with a blank slate, giving him the opportunity to introduce something with real progression in its rates and no loopholes for lifetime gifts — perhaps based on lifetime capital *receipts* rather than donations — which really would begin to limit the size of inherited incomes.

10. *Announce that there will be no poll tax.* Strictly speaking the poll tax belongs to Mr Ridley over at the Department of the Environment, but it is hard to imagine that Mr Lawson would want his transformation of the rest of the tax system into something fair, progressive and rational to be spoilt by coexistence with a tax which would be the exact opposite. After all, it is the history books of the twentieth century that Mr Lawson would like to be part of, not those of the fourteenth. □

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Is Lawson a feminist?

One of the reforms Lawson promises is more equal tax treatment for men and women.* SUSAN OWEN *offers a radical critique of the options

PICTURE the irritation generated on both sides of the Thatcher breakfast table by the Inland Revenue — Denis discovers what Margaret's unearned income is, she doesn't know his, but then he's liable to pay the tax due on hers.

The treatment of wives' incomes as part of their husbands' chattels for taxation remains demeaning and overtly sexist. You don't need to be a feminist to want to get rid of this anachronism — even the government finds it embarrassing, witness two green papers on the issue — the problems arise over what to replace it with because defining sex equality in this context is a thorny issue. More equality for some women may mean less for others.

One thing is certain. It will be easier for Lawson to make up his mind on this one this March than in previous years. This is because tax reforms meet with less resistance when introduced in a context of falling taxation as any potential losers need not receive a higher tax bill. Thatcher's Chancellors devise their budgets by comparing how much cash they had planned in advance to borrow (PSBR) with what it currently looks like they'll actually need to borrow (tax receipts less spending). It looks like as much as £9 billion less borrowing will be needed by 1988/89 than is planned for, which can be "used" to reduce taxation, increase spending, lower borrowing or a combination of these things.

So reform is on the cards. But will Lawson turn out to be a feminist?

As an economist, Lawson would like the tax system to be neutral as to how people choose to behave, ie it shouldn't make any difference to your income or incentives to work whether you are a man or a woman, married or single, a one- or two-earner couple. As a politician, he may want to continue encouraging marriage and home-based caring for children or other dependants.

As a feminist — well, then, it depends on whether he's satisfied by the economist's changes which remove direct discrimination, or whether he wants to go further and tackle the indirect sex discrimination deriving from women's disadvantaged labour market position, preferably in a way which does not introduce discrimination against men or marriage (although some feminists would not insist on this). What do these ideas involve?

Marriage is currently encouraged, at least for males, as married men are taxed on the couple's aggregated income and get a bigger tax-free allowance (£3,795) than single people (£2,425), and an additional allowance (£2,425) if their wife does paid work. So the ratio of married to single allowances is 1.6:1 for one-earner couples and 2.6:2 for two-earner couples. (One-parent families also get the .6 addition.) So aggregation lowers the tax bill, but forces wives to reveal their income to their husbands, but not vice versa. Married partners can elect to be taxed on their earnings as two single people, but this is rarely worthwhile financially as the basic rate applies to aggregated incomes of up to at least £26,500.

Various methods of abolishing the asymmetric treatment of husbands and wives have been suggested. Taxing everyone as an individual is neutral to marriage and dependants, but encourages both partners to work (because couples with two earners get more tax allowances than those with one). To achieve neutrality between one- and two-earner couples with the same joint income you could let a non-working partner "donate" their allowance to the earner.

A transfer of "unused" allowances between partners protects one-earner couples (whether or not they have dependants), but does nothing for one-parent families. Moreover, because allowances are unaffected it discourages second earners from working as all earnings are taxable, and poses horrendous administrative problems for collecting the revenue due from sporadic and part-time jobs. A scheme for partly transferable allowances could lessen the second-earner disincentives at the cost of less protection to the one-earner. So which gives women the best deal?

Both individual taxation and transferable allowances remove the direct discrimination against wives. But in practice not much will change under any system of transfers because an estimated 60 per cent of working-age wives earn less than the tax threshold; their husbands would gain from the transfer and continue to know their incomes. "So what?" you may say, "the money stays in the family for them and the other 40 per cent are treated independently." The problem here is that a growing body of evidence suggests family incomes are *not* evenly shared and women do proportionately more of the necessary spending than they get of the income.

If transfers preserve the status quo, do we really want to encourage two-earner couples with independent taxation? Wouldn't it be better to allow one partner to stay at home if there are, say, children to care for? Here there is a vicious circle. In practice, women would stay at home because their earnings are lower, but their earnings are lower because of their domestic responsibilities. The evidence suggests that continuity of labour market experience is important, and that men do relatively more domestic tasks when part of a two- rather than one-earner couple (albeit still far from a fair share). Women need higher earnings of their own, because men fail to share incomes, because of the risk of marriage breakdown, and because lifetime earnings determine the size of people's pensions. Of course, independent taxation would not of itself improve women's earnings much, but the spirit of the system is correct.

WHAT ABOUT the losers under independent taxation — lone parents and couples where one partner earns nothing or less than their allowance? These are mainly mothers with no earnings or low-paid part-time jobs. The solution for them is to use the extra revenue generated by abolishing the married man's allowance to increase the level of child benefit. This is more efficient than transferable allowances at targeting relief on those who need it most, because in practice it transfers money from the "wallet to the purse". It's also worth more to the poor than the rich. The other one-earner couples who lose from independent taxation are mainly aged over 50, and it might be necessary to let them keep the married man's allowance, but freeze its value until the single rate catches up.

Much of the debate about reform has arisen because lots of women earn too little to pay income tax. However, people have to pay National Insurance contributions on much lower earnings. The low NI threshold sets up severe disincentives for women to earn more because once reached, contributions are due on *all* pay, not just the slice above the threshold. If earning more means taking home less — as it can — you may settle for earnings just below the threshold, even if it means loss of entitlement to certain benefits. So a budget for women would need to reform National Insurance by turning the threshold into an income tax type allowance (along the lines described by John Hills).

Fixing the tax system to treat women like individuals pales into insignificance when you consider the major disincentive for women to earn more — domestic responsibilities. The cash costs of motherhood in terms of lost lifetime earnings have been estimated by Heather Joshi at £135,000; or mothers' earnings are 46 per cent of those who choose to remain childless. Several policy initiatives could lower these costs without necessarily requiring men to do less paid work. A major improvement (especially sensible as there are economies of scale in childcare) would be free or low-charge state childcare for all, and subsidised workplace nurseries. The government should at least make a reasonable level of childcare expenses tax deductible.

Two final things the government could do at relatively tiny expense — end the discrimination against women in occupational pension schemes, and require all pension schemes, including the state scheme, to issue their members with an annual statement of their position to date. This might encourage people, and women in particular, to improve their current and therefore future incomes before it's too late.

So will Lawson turn out to be a feminist? The answer is almost certainly no — if only because the government is totally averse to anything which requires more spending, even that which is revenue neutral, such as independent taxation with increased child benefit. It looks like we'll get independent taxation with partially transferable allowances. This can be achieved at relatively low cost and so leave room for other "reforms". And it's difficult to be enthusiastic when some women get independent treatment, if this closes the door on what would be a more sensible reform all round. □

Susan Owen lectures in Economics at University College, Cardiff and Cardiff Business School.

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STATE OF THE NATION

John Rentoul

Bad news, good news and ancient history

FIRST, THE BAD NEWS. The Labour Party is performing dismally in local council by-elections. The disarray of the Liberals and the SDP nationally has done little (yet) to damage their efficiency as a vote-gathering machine at the local level.

The scoreboard lists the by-elections where local council seats changed hands between 19 November and the first Thursday in February. The full gains and losses table is as follows:

	Seats defended	Seats lost	Seats gained	Seats held now
Conservative	16	2	7	21
Labour	22	7	3	18
Liberal	11	2	4	13
SDP	3	1	1	3
Others	5	3	0	2

The pattern of net Conservative gains, losing two seats but gaining seven, continues last year's turnround in the government's local election fortunes. In 1985 and 1986, the Tories lost more than half of all the seats they defended in council by-elections. But last year they lost just 12 seats out of the 96 they defended, and won 35 more.

That turnround reflected the sudden rise in the government's popularity at the end of 1986 and beginning of 1987, a boost that carried Mrs Thatcher through her third general election victory and that hasn't run out of steam yet.

But these local council by-elections show something rather puzzling happening. Forty-four of them involved all three main parties. In these wards there were 85,066 votes cast as follows:

Labour	26,482	31.1%
Conservative	34,956	41.1%
Liberal/SDP	20,977	24.7%
Others	2,651	3.1%

Compared with the period between the general election and November, Labour's share of the vote has fallen and the Alliance vote has increased. But in national opinion polls since last June, the trends have been exactly the opposite. This month's good news, indeed, is that the Labour Party scored the highest rating in any national opinion poll since Neil Kinnock became leader five years ago — of which more in a moment.

A closer look at the by-election results shows that the Alliance did best in December, before the most recent episode of public foolishness, which began with David Steel's and Robert Maclennan's disastrous "policy document" last month. The Alliance vote fell back in January, despite an SDP gain from Labour in John Cartwright's constituency of Woolwich, in the London borough of Greenwich.

Labour straw-clutchers might point out that in January the party won a seat from the Conservatives, in Jack Cunningham's constituency in Cumbria. But this is only the second gain from the Conservatives since the general election. At this rate, Labour is going to lose control of several councils in the local elections in May.

The loss of a Labour seat in the Owenite Riviera of Greenwich is especially disheartening. John Cartwright's seat is next door to that of fellow disciple of the "continuing SDP", Rosie Barnes, who humiliated Deidre Wood in the Greenwich by-election just 12 months ago. The "London Effect" which became apparent then is still with us, as shown by these figures, adding up all the votes in the 32 three-cornered by-elections in London since the general election.

Labour	19,621	26.0%
Conservative	37,620	49.8%
Liberal/SDP	17,626	23.3%
Others	557	0.8%

The Conservative domination is obvious. But that Labour is less than three percentage points ahead of the demoralised "Alliance" is alarming.

So, where does this leave my argument in this space last month (29 January) that Labour and Conservatives were equal beneficiaries of the Alliance's two-into-three "merger"? (We now have Michael Meadowcroft's Liberal Movement, the SLD and the Continuing SDP.) Well, earlier this month the *Guardian* Marplan poll gave the Tories a mere 1-point lead on 43 per cent, with Labour at 42 per cent and the Alliance on 14 per cent. On those figures, Labour had seized the entire body of former Alliance voters who have been put off by the nice parties' nastiness since the general election. Not only that, but Labour's 42 per cent was its highest rating since the Falklands war.

Leaving aside the fact that 42 per cent is what the Tories got in the general election last year, and that we think she's got no right to govern with a puny mandate like *that*, Gallup quickly applied a corrective with its poll in the *Telegraph* last week. This gave the Conservatives a 10-point lead at 46 per cent, with Labour at 36 per cent and the Alliance at 15 per cent.

But, however much they differ about what people are starting again to call "the two main parties", Marplan and Gallup agree about one thing: at the national level, the Alliance is nowhere. The Alliance has always done better in local elections than its national standing would suggest, but its local performance is now almost *independent* of it.

These by-election results underline the fact that, once the Social and Liberal Democrats get their national act together, as they will, they have a solid base at the grassroots from which to bounce back. The Alliance doldrums in the opinion polls reflects the merger *hiatus* at the national level, during which time the question "If there was a general election tomorrow, who would you vote for?" sounds a bit silly.

IF THAT SHOULD be a warning to Labour, a brief history lesson might restore a bit of socialist optimism. While doing some research for a book in the Gallup Organisation archives, I found a series of opinion polls conducted during the third Conservative term in office of 1959 to 1964. Things were different then. Records were made of this new stuff called plastic and there weren't TV commercials for jeans or employment agencies (so I'm told). But some things were strikingly similar. The 1959 election was a demoralising one for Labour; there was talk of permanent Conservative government, of Labour's inability to appeal to the never-had-it-so-good working classes, of deals with the Liberals.

However, eight months after the 1959 election, a typical Gallup opinion poll gave the Conservatives 46 per cent, Labour 43 and the Liberals 11. If we take the average of this month's polls, the same length of time after the 1987 general election, the Conservatives have 44½ per cent, Labour 39 and the Alliance 14½. On those figures, you would hardly think that British electoral politics had been transformed in any fundamental or irreversible way.

Of course, Labour went on to average nearly 50 per cent in the opinion polls throughout 1963, the sort of rating the party hasn't enjoyed since 1981. But the message is that there was nothing inevitable about the division of votes at the last election, however little movement there seemed to be during the campaign, and however similar the result seemed to that in 1983. The trouble is that Labour's chances of making things happen differently in 1991 depend critically on eating into the former Liberal and SDP vote, and the evidence of recent real polls in local government is not encouraging. □

COUNCIL SCOREBOARD

19 November	
Durham DC	LAB GAIN (Ind Lab)
Hartlepool DC	LAB GAIN (Ind)
Bury MDC	CON GAIN (Lab)
Vale Royal DC	CON GAIN (Lab)
26 November	
Harrogate DC	CON GAIN (Lib)
3 December	
Essex CC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Torridge DC	LIB GAIN (Lab)
10 December	
Pendle DC	LIB GAIN (Lab)
14 January	
Wychavon DC	CON GAIN (Ind)
21 January	
Cumbria CC	LAB GAIN (Con)
28 January	
Greenwich LBC	SDP GAIN (Lab)
4 February	
Shropshire CC	CON GAIN (Lab)
Richmond LBC	CON GAIN (Lib)
Scarborough DC	CON GAIN (SDP)
Middlesbrough DC	LIB GAIN (Lab)

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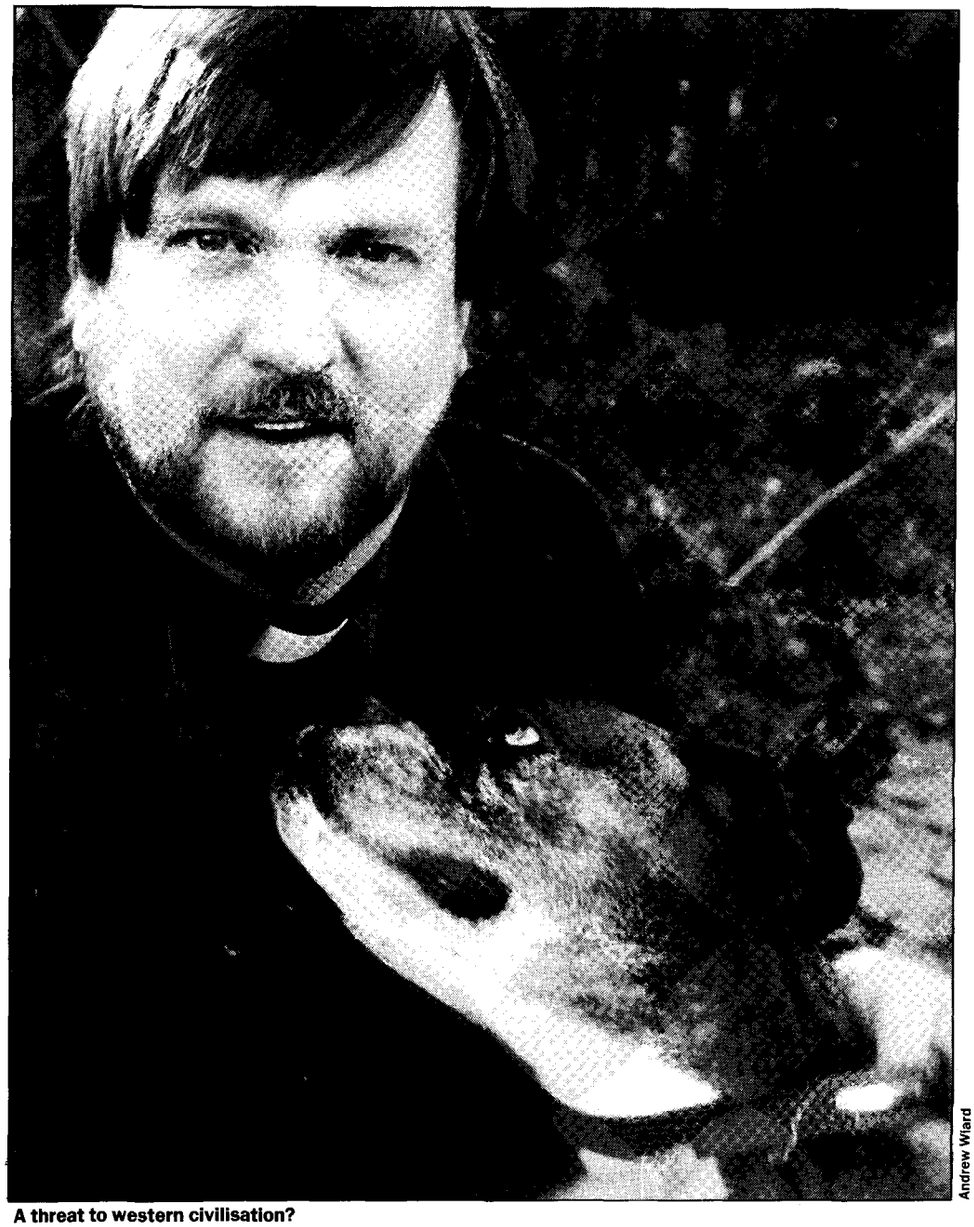
The freedom to love

JEREMY YOUNGER *is gay. He is also team vicar of St Mary's at Bow in the East End of London. On Monday, when news leaked out that he had decided to resign because of the church's hostility to homosexuality, he left London to avoid the attentions of the tabloid press. This is his own account of why he is leaving the church*



Andrew Wiard

A threat to western civilisation?

ON SUNDAY, I am announcing in my parish that I am resigning after 18 years as a priest of the Church of England. When the final decision had to be made, it wasn't as difficult as I had expected. There seemed no choice, though I still wake up in the night in a panic about what the future holds for me.

My story as a priest and a gay man in the church is far from unique. There are, of course, a large number of gays in the church — there have been for two thousand years: a community that preaches acceptance and claims a bias towards those on the edges of society is a natural place for lesbians and gay men to look for security, to look for home. As well as that, there are large numbers of lesbians and gay men among the clergy: ministry is about sharing vulnerability, and one of the great gifts the gay community has to offer to those who care to listen is a knowledge of what it is to be vulnerable and, as I have discovered, what it is to receive from other gay people the gentle art of non judgmental care.

If I am not, therefore, one on my own, if there is a considerable gay community in the church, why do I feel I have to leave? I have known for many years that I am gay. There was no great clanging "coming out", just by the age of about 30 the realisation that I relate sexually to men rather than women, a realisation that is part of my continuing growth, still taking place and which I hope won't stop till death. To be gay is the natural thing for me — it's normal and ordinary. My partner and I sometimes come in from Tesco's, turn on *EastEnders* and wonder how on earth this "pretend family" could possibly be seen to be a threat to western civilisation.

But I'm clearly wrong, for last March the Archbishop of Canterbury in an interview in the *Times* told Bernard Levin and me, "We do not hold erotic homosexual genital processes to be a reasonable way of living for a Christian". That hurt. I was trying to be responsible. I was trying to live in a loving and committed relationship. I had been open about my relationship and I had hidden nothing from the bishops I had worked under. I knew that it was as a gay man that I had become a priest and it was as a priest that I made sense of being gay — they were the two sides of the one coin which was me. I tried to make contact with the Archbishop, I talked with my own bishop, who was totally supportive, but then came the Synod last November, and I realised it wasn't a debate about moral rights and wrongs, as I had supposed, but a battle for power and control. From the public gallery of Church House I watched as gay bishops, gay priests and gay lay people were forced to vote against themselves — forced to vote for a motion that condemned the way that they loved and received love as sinful: not just the irresponsible, the corrupt, the exploitative aspects of that loving, no, the whole of it — sinful.

Undiluted power

What now is the appropriate response for lesbians and gay men who are members of the church? It needs to be said clearly that the motion passed at last November's Synod unequivocally excludes us from the Church of England — that's if we want to continue to grow as loving people able to express that love responsibly in a committed relationship. It seems strange that the greatest threat to the church isn't the gay Christians caught in the trap of promiscuity. They can be pastorally cared for and forgiven. The church does not lose control over them; the power is not diluted. The people who most threaten the church would seem to be those who have stable relationships. It is difficult to "repent" of a relationship without ending it. Gay people working at relationships do not give the church the power over them of being pastorally cared for. For them being gay isn't the problem that leads them into trouble, it's the truth of themselves with which they give and receive love.

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It can't be brought under the church's control. I know in my relationship I have discovered a freedom from the dependence that an over-paternalistic church is only too ready to exert.

I reckoned, when I looked at the Synod vote last November, that I was faced with three possibilities: I could end my relationship in which I've learned and continue to learn what it is to give and receive love; I could become more secretive about it, more circumspect as my bishop advises, so separating my ministry as a priest from what I believe gives it strength and support; or after 18 years as a priest I could leave the Church of England. The first two of these choices are about power: power kept by the institution to control, power to keep those it claims to love and therefore to set free, tucked away out of trouble. The sound of closet doors being slammed shut in the Church of England at the moment is almost deafening. It is only, I believe, by leaving the Church of England, the third of my choices, that I feel I can claim the freedom to love, the freedom to continue as a gay priest. So I'm wrapping up my priesthood and leaving the church. I don't know where I shall find myself but my priesthood remains available for anyone who needs or wants it.

How has the church got itself into this position of declaring love and acceptance and yet excluding a large minority of its members? Certainly not as a result of informed debate. The debate was far from informed, and the last careful look that the church gave to its problem with sexuality, the Bishop of Gloucester's report "Homosexual Relationships", produced nine years ago, was totally ignored by the Synod in its November deliberations. This report was prepared over a long period and admittedly received fierce criticism within the church, yet it did at least state that it is not "possible to deny that there are circumstances in which individuals may justifiably choose to enter into a homosexual relationship with the hope of enjoying a companionship and physical expression of sexual love similar to that which is found in marriage."

Trendy right

It would seem to be the failure of the church back in 1979 to address the issue of sexuality — passing on to other business when the Bishop of Gloucester's report was presented at Synod — that has caused the present catastrophic mess. The leadership of the church seems to have just wished the "problem" would go away so they could make morally definite statements in public while continuing to say totally different things to gay people in their studies. But they did not reckon with the strength of the new trendy right. They came to the Synod well armed with the heresy of totalitarian fundamentalism, or rather a selective form of it, which marks out sexual statements as authoritative while conveniently neglecting other demands laid down elsewhere in the bible such as not lending for interest, not eating shell fish, and other things that are very clearly now virtues in Thatcher's Britain. Why has the debate been conducted at such a simplistic and insulting level?

> ***"For the new right, God is strong, white, paternalistic and morally demanding. He is the source of control and power. He understands when people are "one of us" and when they are not"***

Why hasn't the work of biblical criticism, probably the most important theological movement of the last hundred years, figured at all in the debate? Where are the theologians? Clearly theology is far too important to be left to the bishops.

The bishops were hijacked. The Synod was hijacked. Under the polite constraints of the Synod's way of doing business battle lines were drawn up and the prize was revealed as control.

We may yet realise that the targets of the totalitarian lobby are not the gays, who are simply expendable, but the bishops themselves.

It doesn't take much insight to see that what is here being fought out is more than a church debate about morality. It would appear that we are involved in a political battle that is just part of a total strategy. Conspiracy theories are easy fantasies but here it might not be so far from the truth. There is, clearly, a strong need for the government to appear the custodians of the moral conscience of the nation, to give expedient self interest a moral base. They must realise that so much of what they are trying to do, while it may be thought to be expedient, is certainly difficult to defend intellectually or morally. With an opposition in parliament that has also embraced expediency as its basis for policy, the church seems to be the only body to oppose the canonisation of the Thatcherite vision.

It would be charitable to believe that the Prime Minister met with seven bishops in secret at the end of last year to listen and learn how she might bring her policies under the discipline of the Christian gospel.

It would be reassuring to understand the attack by John Selwyn Gummer on the Archbishop of York, the blocking of radical bishops from moving to important dioceses, the concern about the state of the Archbishop of Canterbury's marriage, the accusations by cabinet ministers of the "Faith in the City" report as Marxist, as simply a concern to promote the things of God, but that stretches my credibility just too far.

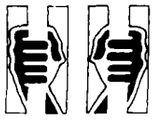
At the heart of this debate there seems a conflict of theologies. For the new right, God is strong, white, paternalistic and morally demanding. He is the source of control and power. He understands when people are "one of us" and when they are not. This, thank God, is a heresy but why for goodness sake isn't it being shown up as such? The God of the Christian gospel is the God of the trinity, God in relationship, a social God: a difficult concept for the government to take on board.

This social God is about the strength of relationship between people and between groups. It is not about morality so much as about love and response to love. It is about responsibility: responsibility in relationship. It is about freedom being the protection of my neighbour's freedom. It is about the relationship between men and women, poor and rich, black and white, straight and gay. It is about the ability to listen. All this, of course, is anathema to the present prime minister who is always "in power" and never "in office".

In the face of all this, why, I wonder, are the bishops so defensive? Why are so many of them managing in their public statements to be economical with their memories about what they do and say in private? We are presented with the Bishop of Ripon being able to say that homosexuality is not a problem in his diocese when it so clearly is. The Bishop of Wakefield, who as a principal of a theological college supported and cared for gay ordinands as they prepared for ministry in the church, is apparently able to say now that he has become a bishop that he would not ordain them. And even the spokesperson of the Archbishop of Canterbury seems not to have known how supportive he was of gay clergy when he was Bishop of St Albans. There are, of course, exceptions. There is the Bishop of Durham, easily mocked, but speaking with the clear voice of the prophet. My own bishop, the Bishop of Stepney, speaks always with loving wisdom and integrity, but these voices are thin on the ground.

So for me the Church of England has ceased to be respectable, either in the terms of the gospel or in the terms of intellectual and honest reason. As I leave the church's ministry I mourn those many ordinary people who are daily struggling with their faith and have so generously allowed me the privilege of getting close to them as I have baptised their children, married them, and conducted their family's funerals. There is now, I believe, a great gulf in our nation that is dividing us: on the one side are those who have made it, those for whom the Thatcherite vision has brought success, money, and the good things of life; on the other side are those who have been used, exploited, so that the few might succeed. They are the poor, the sick, the women, the handicapped, the blacks, the lesbians and the gay men. This, the gospel tells us, is where Christ stands; with those who are the poor and the outcast. I believe one day the church is going to wake up and find it is on the wrong side of that gulf and the gap is too great to jump. In leaving the church I am wanting to stand simply with those who in our society today are seen as expendable. There Christ stands, and I'm glad that I'm gay for it enables me to stand there too and not just stand, but celebrate. □

Jeremy Younger will talk about his decision to leave the church in Heart of the Matter, *at 10.30 on Sunday evening, BBC 1.*



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A return to the Dark Ages?

The Afghan people can't wait for the Russians to go. But they are afraid of what might then fill the vacuum. Najibullah's regime is progressive in ways which fundamentalist guerrillas aren't.* IAN MATHER *reports

Kabul

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV'S recent announcement that Soviet troops would soon start to withdraw is as popular in Afghanistan as it is in the Soviet Union. "Afghan people do not like Soviet people being here," an Afghan soldier driving a military ambulance said to me.

He was giving me a lift back to my hotel, late at night when the streets were dark and deserted. Russian troops had emerged from their camps on the perimeter of the city to set up check points in the centre. The Russians take over Kabul at night when the rebels are on the move. The driver's two companions sharing the front seat nodded their agreement. One hears such sentiments frequently, offered openly and apparently without fear.

However, business is business, and Soviet advisers and off-duty troops do buy things, even if mostly second-hand clothes from all over the western world, which somehow seem to end up in Afghanistan. They do business with small boys too. "Hello, comrade," the boys of the bazaar whisper furtively, "Hashish. Hashish."

Before the Gorbachev announcement the Russians, for their part, had been becoming noticeably disenchanted with the Afghans, and had begun to distance themselves from the Kabul regime. The Soviet media nowadays speaks of a "national democratic revolution" in Afghanistan, never of a "communist" one. This could make it easier to explain things to the Soviet people if the Kabul regime were to be ditched.

The Soviet press is also unprecedentedly critical of events in Afghanistan. A recent *Pravda* article, for instance, complained that free Soviet aid to Afghanistan was being sold on the black market in Kabul. It also said that aid delivered in large containers was being split into smaller units by Afghans, without having labels attached to it to say it was from the Soviet Union. The Afghans had assured the Russians that they always tried to inform the recipients of the origin of the aid, the article said. But it added: "Far from all of those who hand out the aid have either the interest or the courage to tell people that the Soviet Union is stretching out the hand of friendship. We are not losing roubles, but we are losing prestige and influence."

The reasons the Russians wish to leave are political and psychological. The Afghan commitment is a disaster for the Soviet Union's image abroad and is deeply unpopular at home. It is also debilitating. Russian troops interviewed on a road ten miles north of Khost grimaced when asked if they liked being in Afghanistan. The poorly-paid Russian troops sell anything they can, including their uniforms and badges, as well as petrol from their vehicles. As in Vietnam during the American era, a vast black market in used Soviet military equipment flourishes in Kabul. An area known as the Brehzhnev Market, a sprawling collection of shacks in a muddy field, sells miscellaneous Russian military junk, such as old engine parts, screws and bits of wire bought from impecunious Russian troops.

In purely military terms the Russians are not over-stretched. The latest large-scale military operation, which resulted in the relief of Khost, a town which had been cut off by the rebels, demonstrated that the Russians can go anywhere they choose in Afghanistan if they are prepared to apply sufficient force. But if they are not losing they are not winning either. The supply of American Stinger and British Blowpipe missiles has removed the freedom of the skies they formerly enjoyed.

Aircraft leaving Kabul must circle to their maximum height in the relatively safe air space above the city before beginning their journeys. Arriving aircraft dive precipitously onto the airport. All Russian and Afghan military aircraft arriving at or departing from Kabul are now obliged to fire successions of flares as decoys against heat-seeking missiles. No one, especially the dignified, is exempt. The record number of flares known to have been fired to protect one aircraft so far, according to entirely unofficial book-keeping by foreign diplomats here, is 240. That was to ensure the safe departure for Moscow of the Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevadnardze.

War-weary

Yet Gorbachev's recent announcement that the Russians will withdraw and leave the future government of Afghanistan to be decided by the Afghans themselves raises many problems, not least of which is what kind of government will take over.

The first question one is asked by Afghans is: "Do you think the Russians will leave?" The second is invariably: "What will happen to us after they go?" There are widespread fears of a bloodbath among ordinary Afghans in Kabul, especially among those who work for the government. An ironical result of all the talk about a Soviet withdrawal is that fears of mayhem have caused the Afghan currency to plunge against the dollar, making Afghanistan perhaps the only country in the world where the dollar is rising.

While a Soviet withdrawal remains the main objective of western policy, the most important issue for many Afghans is simply peace. People are war-weary and tired of suffering. I have been struck by the extent of support for the regime's policy of "national reconciliation" and also by the depth of dismay at the repeated rejections of the regime's peace overtures by the opposition groups.

"The first question one is asked by Afghans is: "Do you think the Russians will leave?" The second is invariably: "What will happen to us after they go?"

The "national reconciliation" policy, announced just over a year ago, as an attempt to woo back the refugees and win over the rebels, is largely a failure. But it seems to be in tune with popular sentiment in Kabul at least. In the streets of Kabul, all anti-imperialist slogans have been removed on government orders and replaced by appeals for peace to be given a chance. Large paintings of Afghan heroes now dominate the city centre. Without exception all are of heroes of the three Afghan wars against the British in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Their theme is that Afghanistan's successes against the British were achieved through national unity. The result is that the Afghan government is seen as the peace party at the "proximity" talks, which are due to resume between Afghanistan and Pakistan in Geneva next month.

Under the "national reconciliation" policy refugees are offered their property and lands back and financial and other assistance if they need it. The rebels are offered an amnesty and power-sharing, with 28 ministerial posts being made available to opposition groups, as well as the vice-presidency. These proposals are generally derided in the west on the grounds that the key ministries of defence, foreign affairs and the interior, as well as the presidency itself, are not included. But the regime says that the new constitution, approved in December, provides for the presidency itself to be open to candidates from any party.

Ministers to whom I spoke said that as the president is elected by the Loya Jirgah (tribal gathering) it is hard to see how the opposition groups can complain, since they refuse to take part in the proceedings. It is hard to see, too, how much further the regime can reasonably be expected to go during this period of jockeying for positions in the countdown to the next and probably final round of "proximity talks".

The ruling People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan claims a membership of 180,000, which is probably accurate. This is a tiny fraction of the population, even taking into account that the overall population of Afghanistan has dropped to only around eight million.

Moreover, the PDPA figure is even more unimpressive when it is borne in mind that promotion in government service and the armed forces is often conditional on party membership.

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Judah Passow

Going over the top — a return to Islamic fundamentalism if the rebels take power?

But it is a mistake to assume that all the PDPA's policies are without support among the people.

The regime has an ambitious literacy programme, for instance, which it claims has increased literacy to 52 per cent. In 1979, according to UNESCO, 67 per cent of Afghan men and 94 per cent of women were illiterate. The government has decreed that no soldier should leave the army illiterate, and classes are also held in all civilian work places. On one occasion I found myself giving a ride to four women teachers who taught reading, English literature, religious knowledge and biology to staff at the Intercontinental Hotel from 8.30am to noon each day.

University education, formerly the preserve of those who could pay, is now free to all. Despite the ravages of war, there are more students at university than before the Afghan revolution in 1978 — 19,700 compared with 8,000 in 1978, of whom more than half are women.

The Najibullah regime may be fatally compromised by its dependence on Soviet military support. But that does not mean that everything it stands for is anathema to all Afghan people, and elements of the PDPA should be included in any interim government. Such a broadly-based coalition is what the United Nations special representative to the region, Diego Cordovez, is seeking to achieve.

Take-over

By no means all Afghans welcome the idea of a straight take-over by the rebels, especially by the Islamic fundamentalist groups. Afghans are on the whole not fundamentalists. People can be seen praying in the street and in shops and hotel lobbies. But the attitude of the present regime towards religion, which is not dissimilar to that of British governments towards the Church of England, seems to be about right for many Afghans.

Before the tanks rolled by at a military parade I attended in Kabul to celebrate the relief of Khost, a clergyman gave a short recitation from the Koran. This is normal at all official occasions. Afghan leaders, including Najibullah, always begin and end their speeches, "In the name of Allah." The regime prides itself on the number of mosques it has repaired and new mosques it has built. It gives favourable treatment to clerical land, and financial support to Islamic education in schools and universities.

But women are not forced to wear the veil, and their liberation is encouraged, though the regime has had to drop compulsory education for women in some areas because of opposition from Islamic fundamentalist elements. For women, in particular, a fundamentalist Islamic regime would mean a return to the Dark Ages.

Saudi Arabia, which is one of the suppliers of military and other aid to the Afghan rebels, is at least being consistent since it is an Islamic state. But it is strange to find the West supporting an Islamic fundamentalist solution in Afghanistan, even if it could be demonstrated that that was what the Afghan people wanted. The tragedy is that the polarisation of Afghan society between Islamic fundamentalism and communism has left moderate opinion with no voice. □

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Oh! What a lovely debt

Waging war is old-fashioned, costly, and attracts bad publicity, as the Americans found out in Vietnam. Today's smart oppressors have a more subtle way of making people do what they want — lending them money. Here* SUSAN GEORGE, *whose book* on the third world debt crisis comes out this week, examines the idea of debt as warfare

EXCEPT WHEN newspaper editors discern a truly terrifying development, the third world debt problem is relegated to their financial pages. Southern payments crises erupt and subside, Northern plans for coping with them flower and wither, and with them the space and prominence allotted to debt in the mainsteam press.

In the third world itself, however, debt is front page news, because there it is destroying millions of lives and indeed entire nations. At the behest of the International Monetary Fund which now intervenes in dozens of debtors' economies, health, education and transport budgets are mercilessly slashed, consumption subsidies for staple foods go by the board, prices for basic goods and services double or triple overnight at the very time thousands of wage earners are being sacked. Standards of living in Latin America have reverted to pre-1980 — and in some cases pre-1965 — levels, while indebted Africa has virtually become a continental basket-case.

The third world now collectively owes about a trillion dollars to the North. In today's world, this is *not very much money*. On Black Monday, Wall Street lost as much, on paper, in a single day. The world's top 200 transnational corporations have a collective annual turnover of about $3 trillion. The public debt of the United States, which now tops the $2 trillion mark, makes even Brazil and Mexico look like dwarfs. If southern debt has been allowed to fester, if the "international community" — which is to say the rich and powerful nations that run it — has not yet devised a means to overcome the "crisis", there may be good reasons.

One needn't engage in conspiracy theory to point out that debt fits rather neatly Karl von Clausewitz's definition of war. Not only does it allow "the continuation of politics by other means" but it also conforms to his less famous axiom: "War is an act of violence whose goal is to force the adversary to do our will."

What are the traditional goals of war of which debt can be an instrument? Certainly not territorial expansion — what rich country with a stable or declining population needs that? Political control exercised via occupying armies is outmoded as well. It drains the occupier's economy and attracts rotten publicity worldwide, as the US in Vietnam, the Russians in Afghanistan and the Israelis in the occupied territories have all learned to their cost.

For achieving all the other goals of classical warfare, however, and for forcing the "adversary to do our will", debt may just be the perfect tool. Take, for example, the desire for unlimited access on the cheapest possible terms to other peoples' natural resources and manufacturing capacity. Here, the international community is on to a good thing. The indebted countries are *all* receiving exactly the same advice — or, more properly, orders — from the IMF and the World Bank: export flat out. Earn the cash to pay back your debts on world markets, however dire the state of your internal economy and your people.

As luck would have it, markets for agricultural and mineral raw materials are shrinking, and there are only so many people who can buy all those T-shirts, tomatoes and transistors. Northern protectionism is thrown in for good measure, and the unsurprising result is glut. Glut means rock bottom prices, a reality captured by an *Economist* cover in late 1985 as "The Poor Man's Gift". One saw a white hand removing from a black one a bag of cash marked "$65 billion". This cover appeared *before* the precipitous decline of oil prices, and represented Northern savings on raw material purchases from the third world in a single year.

Swap deals

Debt is also handy for controlling the other fellow's national infrastructure, as warring powers have always tried to do. Debt-for-equity swaps are enjoying increasing attention from private bankers, who retire a small portion of debt in exchange for local currency, with which they can then buy up local companies. One $900 million swap deal involves Grupo Alfa, Mexico's major petro-chemical group. For Mexico, this draw-down represents not even 1 per cent of its total debt, and will reduce its annual interest payments by a paltry $10 million or so; Mexico has nonetheless lost control of one of its chief industrial complexes. Several other Latin American countries are desperately trying to sell off their assets, though so far less than $10 billion of their $400 billion-plus debt has been retired through swaps.

The other IMF-Bank rallying cry, "Privatisation", also helps foreigners, occasionally rich nationals, to take control of formerly state-owned industries. Whatever looks like being profitable is fair game. Latin Americans and Africans are welcome to the rest.

In classical warfare, a smart strategist will make the adversary pay for its own oppression. Between 1982 and 1987, Latin America remitted over $140 billion to the north, net. The poor world is now financing the rich one on an unprecedented scale; real interest rates, which were low to negative during the years the developing world was racking up its debts, now hover between 8-9 per cent.

Debt also prevents serious challenges to the dominant world system. For example, when Oscar Arias announced his peace plan for Central America, the United States immediately slapped unusually strict bans and restrictions on Costa Rican exports; it further refused, for the first time, to intervene with US commercial banks on Costa Rica's behalf. With $4.5 billion worth of debt to service — a huge sum for a small country — Costa Rica now finds itself ineligible for further bank loans and the US move has also held up agreements with public sources of credit.

Although debt sometimes leads to direct and unmistakable violence, as when people riot against sudden and unsustainable increases in the cost of survival and are summarily gunned down (Zambia, the Dominican Republic, Morocco, Egypt), its chief advantage is to provide the creditor countries with indirect though no less violent leverage for keeping the third world in line, and forcing it to "do their will".

But it wouldn't do for this to become public knowledge. The United States has drawn important lessons from the Vietnam war. Pentagon theorists and practictioners now favour what they call "Low Intensity Conflict", or LIC. LIC is not just low-intensity: it is low cost (or even profitable) for the perpetrator. Unlike conventional warfare, LIC does not seek "victory". As one observer put it: "Low-intensity strategists have discovered dialectics; they understand it as a permanent global struggle."

In such a struggle, "winning" is not the point — long term control is. It's only a small step from the concept of LIC to that of FLIC — or Financial Low Intensity Conflict. With FLIC, too, total victory, or complete payback, is not desirable because it would mean bankruptcy for the debtors and an end to the game. The crisis is thus strung out, with partial rewards and graduated punishments meted out to debtor countries on a case-by-case basis.

Crucially, LIC and FLIC keep the war off the television screen. They thus offer the added advantage of near invisibility, forestalling dissent and challenges to the system in the creditor countries themselves. Most people think mega-money questions are either incomprehensible or boring or both, and show few signs of taking to the streets in protest.

Yet FLIC is not just destroying countless livelihoods and lives in the south: it is also a war against the citizens of the north. When remittances to banks exhaust all available financial reserves in the debtor countries, nothing is left to purchase farm products, manufactures or services from other sectors of northern economies. US experts have calculated that every billion dollars in lost exports destroys 24,000 jobs. According to those figures, the drop in US exports to Mexico alone since 1982 has wiped out at least a quarter of a million jobs. Latin America used to buy in an average year over three times as many farm products from the United States as did the Soviet Union. Its drastically reduced, debt-inhibited food purchases have contributed in no small measure to the American farm crisis.

Elites in the south have largely managed to insulate themselves from the worst effects of the debt crisis. When public hospitals, schools and transportation systems deteriorate or disappear, they can afford private ones. They go on eating, however huge the increases in malnutrition among their poorer compatriots. Borrowed funds have often enriched them immeasurably, as the scale of capital flight attests. Thus the only force that might oblige them, and the governments that largely represent them, to unify and fight against FLIC is increased popular violence making their own lives impossible. □

**A Fate Worse then Debt*, Pelican £4.50

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Graves ripped open

Two weeks before the fiftieth anniversary of the Anschluss with Nazi Germany, Austria's politicians are fighting over how to represent the past.* MISHA GLENNY *reports

Vienna

AFTER TWO YEARS of concentrating on President Kurt Waldheim's reptilian features, the camera has panned out to reveal an Austrian landscape in striking contrast to the Alpine slopes dominated by rosy-cheeked milkmaids and edelweiss. The Waldheim crisis has exploded into the Austria crisis. For three weeks the country has been steadily sinking into a quagmire from which there is no obvious exit. The report of the international Commission of Historians stated plainly what serious students of Waldheim knew already, that the Austrian President was not involved in war crimes.

But the report also made it clear that Waldheim had lied systematically about his past since the 40s. If Waldheim's cover-up were the only issue at stake, the President would have been forced to resign two years ago. But Waldheim's personal lie is inextricably bound up with a lie lived by a large part of Austria. "Everyone in Austria must realise that the Commission of Historians' report is but a symptom and not the core of the issue," noted Chancellor Franz Vranitzky ten days ago. After 18 months of diplomatic silence, the socialist Chancellor was suddenly speaking lucidly: "Every Austrian, the President in particular, has to contribute as much as possible to an understanding of our past, especially as we approach the anniversary of the 1938 Anschluss," he explained.

Others are not so convinced by Vranitzky's argument. "The only issue at stake here is the right of a democratically-elected President to be afforded the respect the office deserves," cries Vice-Chancellor Dr Alois Mock, who is also Dr Waldheim's most important political ally. Dr Mock regards the emerging historical debate with some suspicion: "Graves are being ripped open which should be left undisturbed."

Despite disliking each other intensely, Mock and Vranitzky are the two men most closely associated with the current Grand Coalition of socialists and conservatives. The government is living proof of the durability of the post-war Austrian strategy of *Sozialpartnerschaft* (social partnership), a corporatist political system which consistently reduces ideological struggle to a trivial minimum. The working class is no more represented by the bureaucracy of the Socialist Party (SPO) than industry is represented by the regional barons of Mock's People's Party (OVP).

A key aspect sustaining the *Sozialpartnerschaft* is the Party Card Economy, which ensures an equal division of influential positions between SPO and OVP. This means that bankers, lawyers, civil servants and trades unionists are equally represented in the two parties.

The mutual antipathy felt between them is motivated more by a crude sense of identity along the lines of a rivalry between two football clubs than by serious political differences. But now the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor have suddenly decided to stake their political futures on two conflicting interpretations of the past. This historical debate is developing into a full-blooded political struggle.

Dr Mock maintains that President Waldheim's pragmatic amnesia is the most appropriate approach to understanding the dark days between 1938-1945. In contrast, Chancellor Vranitzky draws on a wider historical canvas highlighting three areas which Austrians should study in some detail — the period of Austria's own clerico-fascist state, 1934-38; the transformation of independent Austria into the German Reich's Eastern March; and Austria, defined by the allies as Hitler's first victim, under four-power occupation, which ended with the state treaty of 1955.

From strength to strength

Mock is happy with Waldheim's unsubstantiated claim that at the time of the Anschluss his family actively supported the anti-Nazi Fatherland Front of Prime Minister Kurt von Schuschnigg. Austria's sovereignty is all that interests the Vice-Chancellor about domestic Austrian politics before 1938. It would indeed be embarrassing to admit to an ideological heritage of dictatorship and repression. Since independence in 1955 Mock considers that Austria has gone from strength to strength. The Anschluss commemoration, now two weeks away, "should be used to highlight Austria's post-war achievements" he says. The last thing the country requires is a historical debate about Austria's role before, during and after the period of Nazi rule.

A fortnight ago, however, Mock's representation of the past took a serious battering with the anti-semitic outburst of former Foreign Minister Dr Karl Gruber. Dr Gruber, who gave Waldheim his first diplomatic job in the Austrian foreign service in 1945, dismissed the historians' report because the Commission included socialists and Jews, saying their criticisms were motivated by a desire for revenge, as Austria had not paid its Jews reparations after the war.

Gruber's remarks not only indicate the widespread social acceptability of anti-semitism in Austria, they explode one of the key myths upon which post-war apologists have based their defence of Austria as "Hitler's first victim", that because the former Foreign Minister was in the Austrian resistance he should have been untouched by anti-semitism and anti-intellectualism. Not so.

Dr Mock's acceptance of 1938 as the rape of his country by Hitler's Germany conveniently reinforces the image of Austria as helpless victim. It deflects attention from the strength of Austrian Nazism before the Anschluss, the relative preponderance of Austrians in leading SS and NSDAP positions after it, and the terrifying zeal with which Austrians executed pogroms against their Jewish compatriots.

But the OVP is not alone in its selective interpretation of history. Denazification ceased to become an issue in Austria after 1949 when 500,000 so-called "minor" NSDAP members were re-enfranchised. Thereafter a fast way of losing votes was to announce one's intention of instigating a Nazi-hunting campaign.

The most important explanation for the widespread acceptance of this sanitised version of Austrian history is the absence of a critical intellectual tradition within the country. The bulk of Austria's talented pre-war intellectuals, drawn mainly from the ranks of the Socialist Party, the Jewish community and the former provinces of the Hapsburg empire, was wiped out well before the end of the war.

Monarchist structures proved persistent in Austria after 1918, strangling much intellectual initiative. More importantly, with the collapse of the empire it lost much of its industrial base, which had been concentrated largely in Bohemia, Slovenia, Croatia and northern Italy. This accounts for the traditional weakness of the Austrian bourgeoisie. Although the OVP is considered the party of business, the leaders of industry here (who now agitate openly for Waldheim's resignation) have little influence on the tribal instincts of Dr Mock and the influential provincial governors from the OVP.

The Chancellor wants to discard Austria's deep-rooted political traditions of patronage, dishonesty, anti-semitism and anti-intellectualism. He wants to see Austria fully integrated into the community of West European democracies, ultimately as a full member of the EEC.

Vranitzky wants to make up for Austria's botched bourgeois revolution. He has threatened to resign for his principles and in all probability will if his demands are not fulfilled. If the Chancellor wins, Austrian political life will move belatedly into the 20th century. If he loses, the isolated Austria of kick-backs, prejudice and of course the manic Dr Waldheim will be with us for several more decades. □

For many years I have enjoyed reading **Socialist Affairs.** *Covering the progress of democratic socialist and labour parties like ours, it keeps me in touch with events which are not usually covered in the media or, if they are, in a distorted fashion.*
Michael Foot
Honorary president of the Socialist International

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Books

"Shut up you bitch"

This week sees the British publication of **SHERE HITE's** Women and Love, *a 900-page study of the modern American woman's attitude to men, love and marriage (reviewed on the facing page). The first Hite report on female sexuality, published in 1976, made visible many women's secret knowledge of sex — particularly in its findings that 70 per cent of women do not orgasm from penetration alone. The Hite report on male sexuality was published in 1981.* Women and Love, *her third volume, is the most ambitious of all. Collating 4,500 women's responses to an anonymous questionnaire on all aspects of love and living together, it has been described by one American reviewer as "a massive cry from the human heart" documenting, as it does, men's emotional coldness, dishonesty and dependency.* **MELISSA BENN** *talks to the author*

MB: Your book is being hyped up as *the* document of women's suffering in relationships with men. But, reading it, it seems to me that these are the voices of women who are quite coolly looking at, and describing, men as if men are now the "Other" that women were once supposed to be. These women aren't victims at all. They're powerful.

SH: That is exactly right. I keep hearing the phrase "unhappy women". But the book isn't about that at all. It's about women who may be very happy with their lives *in general* but are unsatisfied with the part of their lives that is about relationships with men. Women just don't see their relationships with men as being the centre of their lives any more. That represents a big shift.

MB: In the ideological sections of the book that frame the testimonies, you talk about a long tradition of separate women's values — nurturance, co-operation and so on — as opposed to male values of aggression and domination. Don't you rather romanticise women, and their relationships with each other? For me, at least, there's something missing . . . about the difficultness of women?

SH: Women are wonderful and difficult. Even my best friends are difficult. But even in their difficult-ness there's a satisfaction to the encounters between women, there's a depth to it. So, while women may be unhappy or furious with each other, there's always some meat there. Whereas what women often feel with men is that they may never ever get to know what the man is thinking. There just isn't that communication.

MB: You've been ferociously attacked in the States over *Women and Love*, your methodology in particular.

SH: Yeah, and forget about the fact that Freud theorised about women on the basis of three upper-class Viennese women and now we're living in a post-Freudian world where those generalisations shape our views of women's psychology. And yet the 4,500 women in my survey, answering anonymously, are still not enough.

There's been a huge campaign against me. I turned on the television the other day. There was film running of me with "Is Shere Hite wrong?" written across the top. All that was missing was the noose. And ABC News and the *Washington Post* did what is called an "ambush interview" on me — that's how we are in the States, it's still cowboys and cowgirls — challenging me with results of their phone poll that showed that seven per cent and not 70 per cent [the figure in the book] of women married for five years or more are having sex outside marriage. I said, "Oh, so you call people on the telephone, you don't know who's home with them. They don't know who you are, and then you say 'Are you having extra marital sex?' and you expect them to tell you!" It's a terrifying thing to wake up and to know you're being attacked by three major media corporations — steam rollered, completely flattened.

And reviews of the book often end up saying, "Shere Hite got all these figures wrong, she's a fraud, etc." and then, "Shere Hite is saying nothing new. We've been hearing these complaints from women for ever."

MB: I wondered, too, if you and your book act as a metaphor, as if you represent the wife, or the girlfriend, who keeps on wanting *that* conversation, the one about the "relationship", the one that men dread?

SH: Yes. For the last ten years, men feel they've been chastened. They've been told they have to listen. And with their reaction to this book they're finally saying "Enough already! Shut up you bitch!" Perhaps they feel betrayed by me. Before I was just talking about sex, which was somehow fun, even though I was a feminist. Now, it's not just about sex. It's about a couple's whole life together.

MB: But there's been a big rallying around you too, hasn't there? Twelve Famous Feminists — Gloria Steinhem, Kate Millett and so on — signing a petition, calling a news conference in your defence . . .

SH: Yes, and since then we've been meeting together, and we have organised a group to protect other women who have been attacked in the media as I have. And women have contacted me, written to me from all over the States. It's incredible.

MB: You argue in the book that you are compiling evidence of a "women's revolution", a turning point in western culture. But, in the States in particular, there's a counter-revolution happening too, a return to a religious and secular moral conservatism. How do you match these two up?

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SH: First of all I'm not sure the moral majority *is* a majority. The church appears to have so much support because it's got money. It mobilises people. It's got the institutional structures. But women in those so-called traditional households aren't as different from feminists as we think. A lot of the replies in my book came from a magazine called *Mothering* which is a back-to-the-home publication. Often, religious women, conservative women, turn to the church and motherhood because they think it will give them the respect they want, the respect that women who were mothers in some longed-for past once had. All this is not so dissimilar to the respect that feminists want, but get in another way.

MB: Have you seen *Fatal Attraction?*
SH: Yes . . .

MB: . . . Because in its own propagandist way it argues the exact opposite of your book, doesn't it? That single women are frightened, unstable, living untenable lives, and that it's the married woman who has the good life.
SH: Yes. When all the research shows, and has done for 20 years, that single women, and married men, are the happiest. *Fatal Attraction* is a very scary film — ideologically I mean. It takes us back to the Middle Ages, to a time where women are witches, and you're a good woman if you're married and you don't cause trouble and you don't go out of the home, and you pet dogs the way that wife was always petting that dog in the film.

Yet in one important sense the film tallies with my book, in what single women are saying about the double standard when they go out with men. The man says, "Oh I love you. Let's go to bed together," and then they go to bed together and he says: "Oh you whore, you bitch." And then he trashes her.

MB: Whatever *did* happen to the New Man? The one with a single standard, and his own set of oven gloves? Your book seems to be saying: He came — and then he went away again.
SH: Well, there are probably some. It's just that 90 per cent of men aren't. You can't tell one when you first meet one, you know.

MB: You talk about us being on the threshold of massive change in the 21st century, centring around women and women's values. Aren't you talking about a revolution in purely personal terms? Don't you think feminism needs a public programme?
SH: Women are, and should be, doing all sorts of things at once, the personal and political. People used to say, "Well, if we only pass the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) in the States we'd all be fine." Or in the past, "If we'd only got the vote." And it's never that way. How you change ideology is a real problem. I don't want to duck your question. I don't know the answer. Going in the direction of women unifying more . . .

MB: Unifying how? Politically?
SH: Yes, politically, in whatever ways it takes. And not putting themselves second, as they always do.

MB: You display a partisan passion for *all* women that is reminiscent of early 1970s feminism. You also strike me as completely lacking in "post feminist pessimism", the idea that feminism itself has been and gone, a fear that lurks just below the surface of a lot of British feminism . . .
SH: Well that's not because I'm rooted in an "old" 1970s feminism, but because I've been out there, you know, in the wilds, doing my research. And I saw what you can see for yourself in the book. Which is that women are thinking for themselves, seeing their lives as separate from men. Feminism has gone that far, that deep. □

LURVE

And two for tea

Sara Maitland

Women and Love: The New Hite Report
SHERE HITE *Viking* £14.95

"LOVE" SEEMS TO ME a funny sort of business — especially for women, whose business it is somehow meant to be. With the best will in the world, and even at the most heightened moments of new passion, it really cannot occupy more than a few hours a day. Religious enthusiasts of all traditions have to withdraw from the world to convents and mountain tops and work for decades to get "love" to fill up their every moment. In an average week, I spend infinitely more time engaged in personal hygiene, reading, chatting to my friends, never mind working, than I do in "loving" or thinking about love (even if that is taken to include the tasks I perform for my children). No one, however, is going to spend seven years producing 900-plus pages, and probably an international best seller, on washing, reading or chatting.

When *Women and Love* was published in the USA there were loud criticisms of Hite's methodology and, obviously, those are important questions, given the sweeping claims that Hite makes on her data. But I am not a social scientist and these were not the issues that engaged me. What I did find fascinating, and why I should be very interested to discover if these sorts of figures would be replicated in a "proper" random sample, was how profoundly American women seem to believe in "love": in a one-to-one "total" relationship. Ninety-eight per cent of Hite's married respondents want fundamental changes in their marital relationship — and what they stress is not that they want financial independence, or more genuinely shared child-care and housework (though they do), but that they want *him* to be more emotionally engaged with *her*, to "talk more openly", to do more of the "emotional work".

Now this may, of course, be because what the survey was about was precisely that relationship — rather than one's relationship to work or to the garden or whatever — but even when talking about friendship Hite's respondents stress eye-ball to eye-ball intensity as the thing they most seek, rather than wider social connectedness, peer group or collegial love. America appears to be full of women whose dream is to be a fully autonomous, self-expressing individual who will then spend her entire energies engaged in mutual self-analysis with the beloved other.

I mock because, of course, I know that I would like it too: well raised daughter of post-enlightenment romantic individualism that I am. But I cannot be alone in feeling that this is a distinctly bourgeois dream: the dream that lies behind right-wing ideology and one that should be extirpated from consciousness with all possible speed. Is it possible, I wonder, that Hite's respondents are so depressed not because men are such bastards (which they are, I should like to say), but because putting emotional energy into so unpromising and egotistical a project would be enough to depress anyone?

Hite would not agree. She has bought the project: hook, line and sinker. And, since she does not seem to share with Hume the idea that it is impossible to argue a "must" from an "is", too much of the book is taken up with her moralistic exhortations about the womanly love which can redeem mankind. In fact, the last 120 pages constitute a fine old-fashioned sermon on the love of a pure woman — and the necessity of men changing so as to be worthy of it. Now I agree with that, sort of, only it worries me that, if men should obey this particular summons, no one would "need" friends (whose principal function according to this survey is to provide the "listening" that the men fail to offer), colleagues or sociability.

Since Hite treats lesbian women with great respect and affection, and pretty much concludes that they have better relationships than heterosexual women, it is a little odd that she does not argue that all women should abandon heterosexuality for good and all. Particularly interesting are the women in her sample who became lesbians after turning 40 (24 per cent of the lesbian sample), most of whom report the experience extremely positively. It seems possible to use these findings as another argument against Clause 28: just at the moment when straight women are waking up to what is good for them, access to the homosexual community is going to be reduced. What is morally necessary is not more open men, but more ease on the interface between hetero- and homosexual communities; less emphasis on the private and more on the political, public and communal structures of life (just as feminism originally proposed). But Hite does not pursue her own argument down this track. Instead she wanders off into an sf Utopia, a modern statistical version of the 19th-century "separate spheres" argument.

After 900 pages I felt that Hite could make a wonderful novelist, that these women's voices are as much a creation of her ideological bias as the Angel of the Home was of Victorian men. The western novel does indeed centre primarily on internal and romantic definitions of love and self-knowledge, on ethical etiquette and on "passion". Real life and social transformation, however, do not.

Whether or not her sociological methodology is at fault, there are a great number of moving accounts here, worth reading for themselves (as in a novel), which cannot fail to encourage women to consider their own moral conduct (as with a novel), but taken together they do not seem either to justify the interminable length of the book, nor the claims that we are inevitably on the verge of a social revolution of world significance which promises us Paradise as a reward for being good girls. □

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FICTION

Myself, being English

Paul Binding

The Temple
STEPHEN SPENDER *Faber* £10.95

Enthusiasm, facility, ingenuity, humour, optimism — all these are qualities one associates with David Hockney. But the outward show of owl-glasses, dyed hair, schoolboy clothes, and the impression of idle days in idle company in the Californian sun, mask a passionate experimenter, a wide reader, a natural intellectual, a formidable and often solitary worker. A series of self-portrait drawings done in 1983 partly reveal this other Hockney: one could imagine this person, if he'd not been a golden boy from the beginning, battling on regardless. All the seven essays by different hands in DAVID HOCKNEY: A RETROSPECTIVE (Thames and Hudson, £29.95) take him extremely seriously. The book is both a retrospective itself — splendidly illustrated and with a set of Hockney's latest office-copier prints specially created for it — and the catalogue for the Los Angeles retrospective which has just opened. It comes to the Tate in October and may, I suspect, persuade many doubters to think again about his seeming superficiality and technical restlessness. (John Spurling)

"NOW I SHALL BEGIN to live." So writes Paul Schoner, the hero of *The Temple*, in his private journal on the day of his arrival in Hamburg in July 1929. It's the same hope that his creator expressed in *his* journal in that place at that time.

Spender's novel is partly a demonstration of what "beginning to live" must involve for Paul: 20 years old, at once ardent and gauche, in fact of German and Jewish descent but straitjacketed by the English life into which he was born. This included the Oxford of the "hearties", with their fatuous ragging and their Philistinism, but, beyond this, a society distinguished by fear of anything intimate and a dismissal of the arts that makes Paul and his friends feel like members of a secret society. (Even without Spender's preface, we could recognise these friends as W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood.) Then there, in complete antithesis to so much retreatist stuffiness, is the New Germany, the Weimar Republic, of sexual freedom and experimental lifestyles, of sun-bathing and nudism, of *Freundschaft* and the Bauhaus — all of which the novel most vividly evokes.

Certainly Paul can and does learn much here, perhaps especially about the relationship of psyche to body, that he could not have done in England. But the New Germany is nonetheless Germany, is part of a complex country not only suffering from what is outside it but also threatened from within. It is a remarkable achievement of *The Temple* that it shows, with subtlety and care, how Weimar was undermined not merely by its discontented citizens but by those very people who seemed so inseparable from its "new" culture. It's a revelation of particular poignancy for us in the late 1980s.

Spender has already explored this period of his life, this contact with palpably evolving history: in poems, in his superb autobiography *World Within World*, in essays and in published journals. But the story of how *The Temple* has come to us is a curious one. Written in the years with which it deals, it could not be published at the time: first because, though not precisely a *roman à clef*, it deals obviously with real, identifiable people; second because, on account of its relatively frank treatment of sexuality, it would not have met with the approval of the scandalous British censorship laws. Indeed, British censorship becomes a *motif* of the novel.

Many years after it was written, *The Temple* was sold by Spender to the University of Texas, where, two years ago, John Fuller "discovered" it. Spender has now re-written where he deemed necessary and the entire last section — dealing with Paul's return to Hamburg — has been transferred from the autumn of 1929 to the winter of 1932, time of the death throes of Weimar. So skilfully has Spender operated on his work that it is impossible to detect any joins or stylistic discrepancies; on the contrary, the novel is distinguished by a remarkable singleness of purpose, an unflagging intentness on its themes. For those interested in Spender's poems it can act as a fictive extension of some of the early ones, most particularly that first entitled "Written whilst Walking Down the Rhine" but now known as "In 1929".

This poem is, in fact, quoted from and discussed in the course of the novel, for Paul — while he is not a counterpart of the Herr Issyvoo of Isherwood's Berlin works — is the author of the young Spender's poetry. And in that poem, one of the very finest from these years, we encounter three young men on a Rhineland walking-tour, "the new bronzed German/The Communist clerk and myself, being English". Spender imagines the world and time wound backwards ten years; the new German and the Englishman would have stood as enemies. Or wound forwards another ten: "And the poor third with world-offended eyes/Builds with red hands his heaven . . ." Boris Pasternak, when he read this poem, identified himself with the "poor third".

In *The Temple*, Spender — acting not so much with the hindsight of today as with that he acquired through his knowledge of Germany after 1929 — makes a very significant change from the situation as presented in the poem. In the Rhineland walking holiday that is the novel's pivotal centre, the young clerk — who becomes the new, bronzed German's boyfriend — only *thinks* he is Communist. In truth he is in a muddle about the orator who has impressed him and the anti-bourgeois ideology he wants to embrace. By 1932 — and the section of the novel appropriately called "Towards the Dark" —he has become an enthusiastic Nazi.

Again readers of Spender's poems and autobiographical writings will need no reminder of the writer's lyric ability to convey the dark essence of Nazism. But here he does so in wholly satisfying *fictive* terms. *The Temple* reveals, novelistically and disturbingly, that curious passivity, born of exhaustion and uncertainty, that seems to have been such a characteristic of the New Germany: abdication to the moment, eschewing claims of intellect or heart, the banishing of the past to a point beyond visibility, a refusal to look the future in the face even when the clearest and ugliest features were discernible.

This passivity is most brilliantly conveyed in the full portraits of the two Germans with whom Paul is most closely involved — Ernst Stockmann, his host, and Joachim Lenz. Both, significantly, are

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successful young businessmen whose work-selves do not organically connect to the rest of them. Joachim — it is he who is the "new, bronzed German" — occupies his free time with homoerotic photography (a tribute to the work of Herbert List) and with surrender to those moments of which the photographs are records. While Ernst, both captive of the Hamburg haute-bourgeoisie and aimless sensation-seeker in the port's notorious Sankt Pauli district, is really interested in nothing. By 1932, Ernst, always self-absorbed, has made an almost conscious decision to evade confrontation with the terrible realities of his society. Joachim, the more sympathetic of the two, stands in an even more interesting and troubling position. Beaten up and with his flat wrecked by Horst, his former boyfriend's Nazi comrade, he — acolyte of the sun and fresh air, of freedom and ease — declares his strange desire for his young destroyer. "WONDERFUL," he exclaims, "absurd and MARVELLOUS . . . I'm afraid I'm going to hunt for Horst." Can any statement be more representative of that fetid, fatal collusion with the forces of violence that marked so many — anti-Nazi artists among them — in the Fascist years?

"The Temple", of course, is the body, so neglected in Puritan England and with which one must be at peace since one has to live in it. Weimar recognised that. But it went further, too far, and so "The Temple" is also the pagan obsessive worship of the body and its appeasement at the expense of just about everything else. Tiredness — after World War One, after Inflation — explains that worship to a considerable extent; yet the deity takes terrible toll of its adherents: not only does it incapacitate them for resistance to wilder forces, it invites *capitulation* to those forces. And none of that is comfortable to contemplate in Britain today when, after the long moral holiday of the late 1960s/early '70s, members of the intelligentsia are finding that odious things have crept back. Censorship, for instance. The evil-minded busybodies who saw that Paul and his friends couldn't legally read *Ulysses* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* are thriving anew. *The Temple* is, among other things, a protest for freedom in every sense. □

FICTION

The melting stomach

Marianne Wiggins

Ice-Candy Man
BAPSI SIDHWA *Heinemann* £11.95

A THIRD OF THE WAY through Bapsi Sidhwa's new novel, which pretends to be a tale about Independence, Mohandas Gandhi arrives in Lahore. The year is post-World War II, pre-Partition — say 1946. Lahore, then as now, is the intellectual centre of Muslim literature, the site of a great university and the home of Urdu poets. Then it was in India, now it is in Pakistan.

It would be ridiculous to presume that the Mahatma would choose to visit the city that is the heart of Muslim culture at that specific time for anything less than a calculated, political expediency. However, in the hands of Sidhwa, Gandhi's visit to the city is portrayed thus: "I am puzzled why he's so famous — and suddenly his eyes turn to me. My brain, heart and stomach melt. He is the man who loves women. And lame children. And the untouchable sweeper — so he will love the untouchable sweeper's constipated girl-child best." Unfortunately, no untouchable sweeper's constipated girl-child materialises in this novel to help either the poor reader or poor Gandhijee along.

Rather, the book is peopled (for lack of a better description of how Sidhwa conceives of her characters) by a ragbag of sub-continental stereotypes. There are The Gurkha Soldier ("short and stocky like most of his race"), The Parsees ("prosperous, eating-drinking households"), the British Inspector General shouting, "You won't be able to blame everything on us for long, old chap!" and the Turbulent Unshaven Sikh who tries to take the Brit. Insp. Gen.'s eyes out with a fork at dinner, screaming, "Whyfore then you think we cannot do Home Rule?"

There are also Mother, Father and Electric-Aunt, whose names and roles (although not their dialogues) are blatantly derivative of the rambunctiousness of characters in *Midnight's Children* — but when Sidhwa sets a character with the potentially dramatic name "Slavesister" to talking, the words come out like this: "'After the Mountbatten plan to tear up the Punjab how can you . . .' mumbles Slavesister, shaking her head at the stove a looking martyred."

To which the other female in this scene answers, "If your mutilated body was discovered in the gutter then you'd know how it feels!" Again, no mutilated body in the gutter arrives to help the *reader* know just how the Mountbatten plan must have felt . . .

Much of Sidhwa's trouble in telling this tale lies in her choice of narrative voice. She has chosen to address the most important issues of her country through the words of a seven-year-old girl, a polio victim called Lenny, who recites narrative action like this: "Ayah comes. And with her, like a lame limpet, come I . . ." and, during the aforementioned visit by Gandhi to Lahore, Lenny tells the reader: "Gandhijee certainly is ahead of his times. He already knows the advantages of dieting."

As character fails, so does any sense of the politics of the time — so does any sense of place. The city of Lahore just cannot emerge from this imprecise and amateurish prose. "I am seeing more of Lahore, too," Lenny promises halfway through the book:

> Ayah and I roam on foot and by bus: from Emperor Jehangir's tomb at Shahdara to Shahjehan's Shalimar Gardens. From the outskirts of the slaughter house to the banks of the Ravi in low flood. We amble through the tall pampas grass — purposefully purposeless — and sniff ing the attar of roses, happen upon Masseur: his creamy bosky-silk shirt, his strong forearms and broad ankles stretched out on a dhurrie on the grey sand.

More about the banks of the Ravi and less about the creamy bosky-silk shirt and strong forearms would have helped the reader to make sense of what the fuss was all about. As it is, *Ice-Candy-Man* is a fuddled attempt to inflate a Mills and Boon plot into a novel about Partition and, although Sidhwa's interest in the major issues cannot be faulted, hers is the dramatic failing of having chosen to write about events to which her imaginative power adds no new insight. □

NORTHERN IRELAND

Writer listens

Ed Vulliamy

War as a Way of Life: A Belfast Diary
JOHN CONROY *Heinemann* £12.95

IT IS SADLY TRUE, after nearly 20 years of continuing warfare in Northern Ireland, that books about the perpetrators and the victims of violence have ceased to make much impact this side of the Irish Sea. In the chaos and the resignation, people stop listening to journalists and only a few can still see the landscapes painted by the poets, playwrights and novelists.

The easy thing is to blame the arrogance and indifference of the British — that is fair, but not all fair. There has been a glut of books on Northern Ireland: the people in the Catholic ghettoes of Belfast and Derry — and the guerillas that have emerged from among them — have been scrutinised, like scientific specimens under

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ROUTLEDGE

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laboratory glass, more assiduously and pedantically than any other community in Europe. But all that scrutiny has produced very little in the way of new political ideas, still less in the way of understanding.

Surprising, then, that a book should now appear that adds so much, and so delightfully, to the bulging literature on Northern Ireland. And some might say it was more surprising still that such a book should come from a native of Chicago, where misconceptions about the war in Ulster range from the Irish ex-patriot view of full-frontal battle by gallant battalions of IRA men in trenches, to the question asked of John Conroy by a friend of his: "Tell me, is the IRA Catholic or Protestant?"

Conroy is a writer who came to Belfast and who settled not alongside the British and Americans in the Europa Hotel, glancing pompously at Northern Ireland over a period of weeks, but who, accidentally and nervously, pitched camp in a small boarding-house in the Republican Clonard district, which he grew to know intimately over a series of long stays.

The first clue to the quality of Conroy's book is that Studs Terkel, the great narrator of the life of everyman in Chicago, absolutely loved it. What Conroy has done — not deliberately, but because it turned out that way — is to apply the Studs Terkel ethos to Belfast. He starts at a card table in the bay window of his boarding-house and he works outwards. He listens hard to the people he meets; he does not pontificate — he watches, and narrates. And the result is a portrait of a Catholic community, its fears, its foibles, its humour and its sorrow; the little legends and the big ones which, when they are ignited by such momentous events as the H-Block hunger strike of 1981, combine to forge a rebel culture built not on the polemic of the Provisional IRA but on the details in a life which is now accustomed to war.

There is a view of the fighting from inside Meli's chip shop, where young people bored by real shooting outside in the street, play a video game called "Cosmic Guerilla". The local laundromat plays a recurrent part, as a focal point for news and gossip, a place to say the rosary after the death of a hunger striker, even as a rumoured observation post for the army. There are stories about the operation of the "people's taxis" that run up and down the Falls Road and about their assumed but unproven connection with the Provisionals' "business interests" in the area. Conroy doesn't meet the Provos along their usual Sebastopol Street press office route, but when he is stopped and questioned with a pistol pointing at his head.

At the centre of the *dramatis personae* is Conroy's landlady, Mrs Barbour, who assumes the aura of a fictional character with her nonchalant refusal to heed warnings of a bomb in a neighbouring pub: it has gone up twice already and she wasn't harmed then. Then there's Jimmy Barr, the last squatter in a razed plot of land required for a housing development, who was eventually cowed into submission. And there is Tony who, aged ten, picked up what he thought was just a transistor radio but is still badly scarred by the shrapnel that exploded into his face. There are the petrol bombers who forgot their matches and there is Swami Vishnu Devanda who stands on his head for peace. When the hunger strike comes, the usually faceless figures who man the makeshift barricades and attend the meetings in the monastery yard are women or children that Conroy knows or recognises.

For people who know little about Northern Ireland, this is a good first book; the anecdotes are supported by an A-B-C history, which arrives empirically at a Republican conclusion. For people who know Belfast well, Conroy is the narrator of what we had forgotten to remember: the first afternoon walking down the battered Springfield Road, the absurdity of any pretence by British governments that this scene could be called "normal" and disbelief at the little things that *are* perfectly normal. Also the incessant curiosity that becomes addiction to the place, and the absurdity of suddenly catching yourself saying "thank you" to the police officers who search you on the way to the city centre shops.

But, as the hunger strike takes its toll on the community and the families of those who died, the curiosity, of course, turns to weariness. On the day of the funeral of the hunger striker Francis Hughes there are three others to choose from: that of a milkman killed by rioters, that of a little girl killed by a plastic bullet, that of an INLA man killed by army gunfire. While the world's mass media take their choice, Conroy stays home at his bay window. And, at the end of the book, even that corner is invaded — the Provisionals commandeer the boarding house as a vantage point. Conroy and Mrs Barbour watch *Coronation Street* while the Provos make tea in the kitchen and mutter into their walkie-talkies.

Conroy's book teaches a lesson that writers on Northern Ireland seem to find hard to learn: that it is keen eyes and ears, not a big mouth, that help to explain a battle like this, and that breezy political pedantry will always fail where an interest in real people will succeed. Thus he produces the best book to date on Northern Ireland, not least because it is not just about Northern Ireland. Conroy said in London last week: "After Belfast, I realised for the first time in my life what it must be like to be black in Chicago, or to be one of any minority where there is violence like that. That what motivates these people is not hatred, but fear. All of them." □

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AFRICA

Diamonds and cows

Naomi Mitchison

The Politics of Development in Botswana
LOUIS A. PICARD *Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, Colorado, USA* £26.50

THE GENERAL VIEW of Botswana is that it is nicer than most African countries, more like us, no censorship, no opposition leaders in prison, high percentage voting — in fact, a real democracy. Well, it's true that the Batswana in general are nicer, gentler and friendlier to outsiders. They were never slaves, never slavers: that counts. But a real democracy? Louis A. Picard's book which, wherever I can set it against my own knowledge is both accurate and clear, gives a rather different picture.

The whole adult population of Botswana has been able to vote since independence in 1965 and has always elected the ruling government party, the BDP — except in a very few constituencies which, because they feel themselves to be either racially or economically oppressed, vote for a small and divided opposition, allowable because so powerless. This is not the only country to vote for the rich and powerful, hoping perhaps that some of it will rub off.

Botswana has useful minerals and super-useful diamonds, but it has always been cattle country. For generations the Batswana have loved cattle, have had a hundred ways of describing their beauty and strength. Cattle are the second largest

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export.

When I first went to Botswana, in 1962, almost every family had a few cattle and those with only a goat or two planned for the time when they could acquire a cow. These were essential for ploughing and the sight of a six-span waggon going out to the lands is unforgettable. But, since then, there have been two droughts. Small owners without easy access to water have suffered, perhaps lost all. Figures for 1970 show half the population owning only five per cent of the national herd, with six per cent owning 40 per cent. A survey five years later showed many more families, even in the rural districts, without any cattle, while 15 per cent, the large cattle owners, now owned 75 per cent. In the last few years, especially since some recent legislation, the percentages have widened further. The figures in this book about cattle owning, and indeed about other matters, are all from official sources and extremely interesting. They tell their own story, which is largely of a conflict between capitalist economic growth and natural justice — something which is all too familiar.

Let me add that almost all the elected members of the National Assembly spend weekends and free time, not with their constituents, but on their farms, giving attention to their cows. The same for the top civil servants and, naturally, the businessmen. They can afford to buy loads of grass from Pandmatenga up north, to sink their own bore-holes (how many more can Botswana stand?) and to encroach on lands where up to now hunters and gatherers have been able to make a small living.

The Kalahari is threatened. All this from the Tribal Grazing Land Policy, which government optimists thought would take some of the biggest herds off the common grazing on tribal land. Instead, it encouraged the big men to start huge fenced ranches which can produce a steady sale of beef but has turned too many poor but independent Batswana into peons.

Picard's book also covers — with a clearer view, I believe, than any of its predecessors — the political history of this country, casually grabbed into the British Empire in case the Germans got it. Money was always scarce. In the early 1930s, for instance, the Regent Isang in Mochudi had a vision of vocational training for all and needed a few British specialist teachers for the school that he and the tribe had built and started. He asked for help towards salaries and was refused. *Missions* might be helped; not a school started by "natives".

By then more and more white officials were coming in, bringing their version of law, order and commerce, suspicious of other powers or customs. Some became deeply and usefully involved, as did some of the Missions, especially on the health side. When it was decided that the Protectorates were not to be handed over to South Africa but, for the moment, run from the UK, the South African citizens in the bureaucracy were pushed out, though the capital (then Mafeking) was across the border, where blacks and whites could not even eat together.

Then came fairly rapid growth for a small nation without resources (though the presence of minerals was suspected) and liable to killing droughts. It must be readied to enter the civilised world by more and more expats: civil servants and experts with conflicting views on, for instance, agriculture and education. This becomes clear in figures, statistics and tables, very effectively used by Picard who is not a professional writer, but so deeply concerned that he makes his points every time.

The inside story of the British civil servants, some of whom gave their full love and working power to Botswana, is fascinating but bothering. There was an inevitable Nanny Knows Best and a copying of British images, not necessarily appropriate. Local Government has never quite got going; the central bureaucracy feels it couldn't be as competent as itself and, indeed, might go in a "wrong direction". All this has ended with a country run by well meaning and well paid bureaucrats, Batswana steadily taking not only whites' place, but also their customs and ambitions.

But let us remember that the Civil Service did keep a good eye on contracts. Not all African countries would have made a deal over minerals and diamonds which meant money going clean to the Exchequer to be spent on such things as building roads and schools. Botswana has a fine tradition here. It is now one of the richest countries in Africa. It has inevitably become to some extent tangled with neighbouring South Africa (which has nonetheless been known to make the occasional murderous raid) in a customs union which makes it difficult to trade in any other direction. Many people who were small farmers have moved to the capital and are now in secondary industry, depending on primary industry across the border. They may feel insecure but, even if they vote for the opposition party, they realise it will make little difference. It is nicer for people to be run by bureaucracy rather than by tyranny, but it is inaccurate to call it democracy and it may have its special dangers. Most Batswana by now are fully in the web of government and can only hope to survive and even prosper by doing what they are told, and hoping that their children will become little government servants. □

FEMINISM

Speech and silence

Nicole Ward Jouve

Woman to Woman
MARGUERITE DURAS and XAVIERE GAUTHIER trans. KATHARINE A. JENSEN *University of Nebraska* £16.10

MARGUERITE DURAS has been lucky. She's made it.

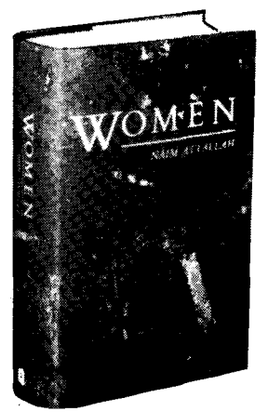
Her novel *L'Amant (The Lover)* has been a bestseller, making her rich in her old age after the long lean years. In spite of her high reputation, she complains she had to eke out a living on her foreign rights sales. She was robbed of millions owing to a bad contract for the screenplay of *Hiroshima mon amour*.

So it's nice to see her afloat — all the more so as her publisher Lindon from the celebrated Editions de Minuit has been put afloat as well — even though it has all come so late. One almost thinks, at times, too late, for Duras' behaviour in the media since it all happened has been anything but discreet, to say the least: she's moved from the left to a bizarre neo-conservatism which made her support Reagan's raid on Libya. Does she mean it, one wonders, or is it deliberate provocation? Glory is hell, Duras says: "People invite you to dinner to show you off like an animal they bought and especially tamed." Better run away with the bit between your teeth?

One of the results of this late fame is a rush of Duras translations — not only of her new books, but even of the older stuff which nobody wanted at the time. So we get these 1974 conversations between Duras and Xavière Gauthier, the editor of the 1970s women's review *Sorcières* and one of the first writers to be published by Des femmes.

WOMEN

NAIM ATTALLAH



Feminism is one of the eight principal topics spread across 1,100-plus pages in *Women*. The women's views appear within topic sections. The effect is of a kaleidoscopic conversation in a packed, great hall. The more measured reader could select from names as enticing as Doris Lessing, Delphine Seyrig, Juliet Mitchell, Margaret Drabble or Charlotte Rampling and follow their views through the sections.

The "book of interviews" has become a publishing cliché. The scale of this one makes it different. So, too, do the force and range of opinions expressed . . .

***Women* is alive with forceful views, as well as lovely moments of pure gossip . . .**

One could take these women's opinions to bed and go to sleep wiser for weeks. With thanks, of course, to Naim Attallah.

Stephanie Dowrick

QUARTET BOOKS

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Gauthier had been asked to interview women writers by *Le Monde*, the interviews with Duras grew to book length, and Minuit published them. They have something anachronistic about them, given Duras' evolution, and the now muted state of the women's movement in France. But then, this is a phenomenon of the '80s: the new becomes obsolete at a dizzying pace, then assumes a retro charm. Nostalgia is one of the few bull-markets left around.

Yet *Woman to Woman* remains a fascinating book.

It's not just that the manner of the interviews is attractive and appropriate to Duras: the leisurely, meandering pace, the interruptions, the openness, the erased or lost bits, the thematic, obsessional returns. Nor just that many insights into Duras' books and films are provided. It's just that a lot of what the speakers, the "parleuses", say remains relevant: the talk about writing and desire, about the lost art of loving, the transgression there is whenever a woman writes. The hole in the afternoon of the women who stay at home, the "spaced out" activity of chores, the boredom, the suicidal tendency: "It's only in prisons that man lives woman's experiences of time, lives it, I think, completely." The vote: "What a fraud!" Someone saying to you, "choose me" when you haven't asked him for anything. The need to go through Marxist awareness, and the realisation that it cannot effect the cure: "There's a kind of schizophrenic crossing between the proletariat's knowledge and its subjection . . . it's just like a person who is mentally ill — he knows all about psychoanalysis; he can practically analyse his own case, but the illness remains. His knowledge is not enough."

Against the excess of knowledge, the exploitation of knowledge, Duras returns again and again to the virtues of silence, of passivity. The impenetrable forest of her childhood, the Indochina jungle where she wandered with her brother, where the creepers 30 metres above your head were full of fish, in suspended basins between the trees, and where so many convicts died to build a road in the Mekong Delta that it was like the Way of the Cross. From that lost, ambiguous, poor white colonial childhood so many of Duras' books have come, keep coming.

And so despite the period flavour, despite all that has happened to Duras and to us all since these interviews took place, they convey something that is essential about Duras (essential for us too?): the rich passivity, the whites, the informed silence. The capacity for excess, for turning things on their head.

An anecdote she recently told held them all. She flew to Rome airport, to work on a film. The people supposed to meet her didn't turn up, or missed her. She sat in the airport for eight hours. She was staring at a large coffee stain she'd made on her white skirt. The stain, in these interviews, already assumes an unexpected dimension. The "parleuses" are talking of Mary, mother of God, who being immaculate, must not have had periods, has no stains.

To Gauthier who suggests that means that all other women are impure, maculate, Duras replies: "That's an interpretation of nature that was distorted from the start, because you could also regard periods as a surplus of life, an excess of life." □

ARTS

Icon for doomed youth: David Bomberg's portrait of his stepdaughter Dinora, drawn during the Spanish Civil War

Triggers in a landscape

"Whether the paintings and sculptures of the future are carried out in ferro-concrete . . . or helium . . . man is yet subject to gravitational forces and still dependent on sustenance from nature." **JOHN SPURLING** *looks at the rehabilitation of* **DAVID BOMBERG**, *one of this century's most passionate and idiosyncratic British artists*

NICHOLAS SEROTA, Director of the Whitechapel Gallery and Director-designate of the Tate, comes in for a stinging attack in the editorial of Peter Fuller's new quarterly magazine, *Modern Painters*. But whatever Serota's "errors in judgment" in putting on exhibitions of fashionable tat by such as Carl Andre, Malcolm Morley and Julian Schnabel, he deserves more credit than Fuller accords him for his many successful exhibitions, in particular those which helped to resuscitate Max Beckmann in 1981 and David Bomberg in 1979.

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Both Beckmann's and Bomberg's reputations have soared in the last ten years; from being almost forgotten figures, the one vaguely filed away with post WWI German Neuesachlichkeit, the other equally inappropriately with pre-WWI British Vorticism, they are now rightly seen as major artists, powerfully idiosyncratic and passionately independent. Indeed it was no doubt their personal intransigence and inability to toe any of the lines of their time, whether drawn by traditionalists or the various factions of the avant-garde, that relegated them to obscurity. But if the obscurity is now seen to be only temporary and if Beckmann, towards the end of his life, did receive substantial recognition, Bomberg's was a life sentence of neglect and humiliation. Serota, when he takes over the Tate, could best counter Fuller's criticisms by resisting all the fashionable and commercial pressures on him, by doing what is far more difficult than stimulating an incipient revival: he could seek out and encourage the Bombergs who are still alive and struggling.

It was the Tate, with its 1956 *Wyndham Lewis and Vorticism* exhibition, which dealt Bomberg his knockout blow, representing him with one pre-abstract drawing in the section entitled "Other Vorticists". He spent the last year of his life in a state of severe depression drafting letters to *The Times* (which he never sent), in an attempt to justify himself and his work. The present retrospective is therefore, like so much else in the Tate's melancholy history as a museum of modern art, a case of opening the stable door after the horse has been sold. Nevertheless, in so far as it can make amends more than 30 years later, it does so handsomely. The show, selected and catalogued by Richard Cork, whose biography of Bomberg was published two years ago, includes every phase of Bomberg's work, from a charming charcoal portrait of his sister made when he was 15 to the last desperate self-portrait, in which the face is split, masked and fragmented as if it had met with a fatal accident — as indeed, by the Tate's negligence, it had.

In the first gallery — especially in *Vision of Ezekiel* and its studies and the rarely shown *Island of Joy* — one can see him as early as 1912, at the age of 22, eagerly adopting virtually all the newest ideas in art at the same time (frenzied movement, startling colour harmonies, violently diagonal composition and increasingly mechanistic figures). The second gallery contains the exemplary abstracts of 1913-14 — *Ju-Jitsu, In the Hold* and *The Mud Bath* — in which deep space and solid forms in movement through it are translated into flat colour and pattern, with the effect not of losing space, form and movement, but of pointing them up as the realities of the painter's world.

The third gallery has the rejected version of Bomberg's commission for the Canadian War Memorials Fund, *Sappers at Work*, in which the change of outlook caused by his experiences in the trenches during WWI is as clear as if he were to walk up and tell you about it in so many words. Clearer, in fact, since his thoughts became clumsy and matted when he tried to put them into words, whereas his virtuosity with the brush or the pencil and his strength of visual feeling were such that in paint or charcoal, he always expressed exactly what he meant, hid nothing, left nothing inchoate. In this painting — deficient in many ways as a composition and certainly, to the patrons' eyes, as a record of their heroic exploit in mining part of the enemy trench-system — he shows you his new horror of machines, his flinching sense of the soft, easily torn textures of the human body.

The topographical exactitude of his 1920s landscapes of Jerusalem partly signalled his post-war uncertainty and desire to please patrons, but seen here in context they no longer look so out of keeping with the rest of his work. They represent his shift from figures and indoor spaces to landscape. Whether consciously or not, Bomberg, now in his thirties, was retraining himself, adding photographic naturalism in a brilliant light to his formidable skills with chiaroscuro, colour and hard-edged shape. The simultaneous complexity and clarity of these panoramas mark them out as his. Though they couldn't look less like the pre-war abstracts, their combination of masterly objectivity and the exhilaration of wielding such mastery is similar. And when, on the next wall, one sees the infinitely more expressive, no less complex landscapes of Toledo which grew out of them and which in turn gave Bomberg the key to all his later work, it becomes obvious that if his excursion to Jerusalem ruined his standing with the art world and literally led him into the wilderness for the rest of his life, it was also the beginning of his maturity. This splendid exhibition gives the measure of that as authoritatively as it charts the preparatory stages.

Bomberg's posthumous triumph is not confined to the Tate. At Gillian Jason's in Camden Town there's a good selection of his works on paper, notably from the earlier periods. Bernard Jacobson's has paintings and drawings from all periods, including two explosive flower paintings (there are four more in the Tate) and a very late Ronda Valley landscape in the dazzling orange which is as characteristic of Bomberg in his most ecstatic mood as yellow of Van Gogh in his. Odette Gilbert's has very few works, but they include a fine bleached landscape from the Jerusalem period. Fischer Fine Art and the Boundary Gallery will weigh in with their tributes next month. □

The David Bomberg retrospective at the Tate runs until 8 May. Other exhibitions are at Gillian Jason, 42 Inverness St, London NW1; Bernard Jacobson, 2a Cork St, W1; Odette Gilbert, 5 Cork St, London W1.

TELEVISION

Redlegs in the sunset

Nigel Fountain

Redlegs
C4, Sat. 27 Feb, 7.30-8.30pm
Up North: Gangmasters
BBC2, Wed. 2 March, 10.20-10.50pm
The Play On One: Airbase
BBC1, Tue. 1 March, 9.30-10.50pm

SOME SAY they are lazy, observes narrator Peter Simmons of the Redlegs of St John, eastern Barbados. Yet, when they work communally, they are often diligent, he adds, and many are undoubtedly very fine fishermen, servicing the new white tourism of the island. Anyway, the dropped-out Barbadians, who often still call their home the "colony", deny the charge of torpor; discrimination is the problem, grumbles one.

Colin Thomas' **The Redlegs: The Poor Whites of Barbados**—to be networked on C4 this Saturday—is about a ghost community. Cromwell's Commonwealth swept the roads of Ireland and the slums of London 340 years ago to pick up indentured workers for the sugar plantations of the Caribbean. At least one in five died in transit, packed below deck. They were flung to the sharks. "A terrible man is this dictator Cromwell," charged a contemporary critic, "he dislikes shedding blood, but it very apt to Barbadose an unwilling man."

Barbadose... Long before Shanghai, the island furnished another stark verb from the underside of empire. And the Great Protector's gulag also generated sugar for mercantilism and "a dunghill where on does England cast forth its rubbish, rogues and whores and such like people". There the Redlegs stayed, accents blending with those of the later African slaves, but still echoing the intonations of pre-industrial Britain and Ireland, faces reflecting the decay of three centuries.

Once they got lucky. Labelled bad workers, they were supplanted by black slaves and some became overseers for the planters. Then slavery was abolished and they slid the final inches back to the bottom of the dunghill where most of them have remained in dwindling, inbred numbers.

Historical reconstruction is usually a pain, with Equity cardholders thee-ing and thou-ing. Here it is discreetly done amidst the blue seas and greenery. And former Barbadian United Nations representative Simmons' commentary is sensitive. The Redlegs themselves talk slowly of their lives like people vaguely remembering a terrible accident. Some are still groping after the lost verities of racism, some pursue revivalist religion—down the hill from the High Anglican church where they once peopled the back pews behind their planter masters—but some have finally turned the key on the time-lock, bucked the warp of history.

"Where profit is the pivot," concludes Simmons, "all other considerations are secondary." The casual employees of **Gangmasters** would probably agree as they take time out from courgette picking, cauliflower breaking and money grubbing amidst Lincolnshire's soggy soil. Gangmasters recruit labour for the locality's rich farmers. If you are lucky you *may* get more than a tenner a day, but if the rain comes on the job is off and it's back to Sheffield for the unemployed steel workers, engineers and yoppers of that city.

"If they're taught to work then they work for the rest of their lives," says a woman who made it from casual work to a farm, Jaguar and—*de rigeur* for the 1980s—a carphone. "In actual fact they're no different to horses or dogs." Shocking? No, not really; everybody is making out in "this day and age", as a gangmaster with a million pound annual turnover puts it. What is real is rational, and what is real is French competition in the commanding heights of the cauliflower market, the pressures of the supermarkets, derelict steel mills and busted unions.

Gangmasters is the second of six *Up North* films which give BBC North East the chance for a slice

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of the national Corporation cake. It was several notches up on last Wednesday's *The Bigg Market* which ciné-vérité wild teens in Newcastle's fun district. This comprised youth knocking back Red Stripe—class, at £1.35 a shot—while queuing for the action and Picking Up Birds. Teenprobes often spell tedium and *Bigg Market* was another destination from which no one returned much the wiser. The obligatory taxi driver muttered about where the unemployed kids got their money from, and nobody answered his question. Maybe they were waiting for the Lincolnshire minibus.

It's all very well going on about Cruise, I used to opine sagely in the early days of deployment; what about the US Air Force's F111s? *They've* been humping H-bombs around East Anglia for years and no one gave a blind bit of notice. Then came the Libyan raid and the aardvarks—as crewpersons call them in **Airbase**—crashed into our collective consciousness.

Airbase deals with the arrival of a woman USAF lieutenant at an F111 base and her initiation into the rituals of the Men Who Fight For Peace And Live With Death Daily. They drink hard, fly fast and don't get easily fazed by Ivan or phallic objects. Mind you, they need substantial back-up. They knock back Jim Beam, snort coke, shoot up—with and without the F111s—ship drugs and try to get laid.

Airbase could be seen as a chilling Strangelovian fantasy, an allegory of the price we pay for our addiction to a fix on terror. It's also cracking good copy for the tabloids' "The BBC—Why Oh Why?" slot. But mostly it is a trifle difficult to follow. The cast grasp briskly with their accents and the plot, and wrestle it to the ground on several occasions, but when the smoke cleared my brain was as empty as the ten kiloton bomb bay. It does raise a question mark on how the USAF was able to *find* Libya, let alone murder anyone.

SHORT CUTS: Lucinda Lambton's **40 Minutes: The Great North Road** (BBC2, Thurs. 3 March, 9.30-10.10pm) is a wonderful journey from London's Barbican to Edinburgh and, for once, into acceptable upper-class eccentricity. It clashes with Mike Newell's **Dance With A Stranger** (C4, 9.30-11.25pm) on murderer Ruth Ellis' journey into nouveau riche catastrophe. Unseen by this reviewer is **Raymond Williams: A Tribute** (C4, Sun. 28 Feb, 9.55-10.25pm) with Stuart Hall, Judith Williamson, Anthony Barnett, Terry Eagleton and Dafydd Elis Thomas MP. □

THEATRE

More than comfort

Paul Allen

Kiddar's Luck
JACK COMMON adapt. PHIL WOODS *North East Community Tour*
McAlpine's Fusilier
KEVIN FEGAN *Contact Theatre, Manchester*

THE BUST of Karl Marx in Highgate Cemetery in London (bet you didn't know this) may have eyebrows modelled on the man himself, but the forehead onto which they are stuck belonged to the near-forgotten Geordie writer Jack Common. So it says in *The British Working Class Novel in the 20th Century*, quoted in the programme for Live Theatre's new production of **Kiddar's Luck**. The authority: sculptor Lawrence Bradshaw, who saw in Common's brow "human qualities I understood from reading the life of Karl Marx. Human sympathy, tolerance, profound understanding and inexhaustible patience".

All those qualities are present in some measure in Phil Woods' adaptation of Common's novel. So is a muscular clarity of writing, an astringent humour and the occasional shaft of lyricism breaking through the sardonic realism like sunlight in winter; taken together, with allowances made for the Newcastle vernacular, they remind me more than a little of Common's '30s friend, George Orwell, and they make a comfortable revival of a local hero's work into something more than that — the consolation for the sometimes terrible nature of human experience that good art is when the lesser kind merely diverts you from the terror.

It is a wry autobiographical story which begins with Will Kiddar choosing the wrong place to be born and ends with him running away to London to avoid the consequences of a burgeoning criminal career. His father is a rough engine-driver who pauses in the act of getting Will to notice the passage of the 2.28 train from London to Edinburgh. His mother, a theatre-lover, has married beneath her, as working-class writers' mothers will.

Too bright to be much helped by his schooling and too ambitious to settle for the formula of taken-for-granted marriage and a factory job, punctuated by religion or brown ale to taste, Kiddar is not a preaching hero. Indeed, although he has a comically eccentric uncle who worries about eating sugar (this during WWI) and quotes Proudhon, Will himself is largely without morality. So, although settling down with a pint in the congenial surroundings of the Buddle Arts Centre, Wallsend, was a comfortable experience, and Max Roberts' production is fluent, economical and entertaining, the content of the show is not merely comforting at all.

Oddly enough there is currently a commercial tour out of Rob Bettinson's adaptation of Catherine Cookson's *The Fifteen Streets*, also set on Tyneside around 1910. It teems with character and incident and life, like a recently disturbed anthill, and it has a compelling narrative about an educated woman dead set on marrying beneath her. But Cookson/Bettinson do not aspire to the matter-of-fact toughness of a line like: "You wet yourself over me because I was strong but you despised the work that built the muscles." The harshness of life is never quite there, although the poverty of the community is part of the point of the tale — it is the greenhouse in which romance is a cultivated blossom. With Common/Woods it is the blight that kills it. Cookson comforts us much as simple religion once did: happiness is not to do with class or wealth and goodness will lift you out of this poor but picturesque vale of tears. Will Kiddar isn't good, but Joe Caffrey's whippet-keen truthfulness in the role is; that's the comfort.

"I am Ireland's pagan past," cries the scantily-dressed athlete who rises from the floor at the start of **McAlpine's Fusilier** and announces himself as Cu Culann, the legendary hero and defender of Ulster. It is a brilliant conceit by Kevin Fegan to insert a living myth into contemporary Irish history. It is a winsome idea to have him try to persuade a humble navvy in digs in Manchester to take up the battle for the Six Counties. It is above all a bold ambition to put the play partially into verse, challenging a number of famous Irish ancestors. But in the event a wonderful opportunity to explore both the link and the gap between a dirty deed and the heroic telling of it, acknowledged long ago by Synge, disappears in a play whose writing is simply too ordinary and whose rambling structure raises the biggest subjects imaginable only to let them dribble away.

The story is improbable but not unserviceable. Cu Culann's last descendant starts out already forgetful of faith, family and flag but drifts into middle-aged rage when his own son becomes so Anglicised that he will have a child out of wedlock. Before our hero can embrace the IRA, however, the compelling love and good sense of his wife win him back for decency. This should have been comforting but, since the issue was no longer live by that time of night, it wasn't.

Theatre may not always deliver the goods but it sure covers the ground. This week I have also seen a blandly uplifting new play about racism — *A Visitor to the Veldt* by Mfundi Vundla — from Temba Theatre Company and a disturbing and rather beautiful theatre-in-education play about potential persecution of homosexuals by Noel Greig, *A Plague of Innocence*. Outside the theatre you would have to be a politician or a bishop to deal with the same range of subjects and you would be unlikely to meet the theatre's range of audience. No wonder we ask for comfort from it — and a little more besides. □

BLACK ARTS

Not if but how

Naseem Khan

SOME TRIPS into the past are not good ones. A few weeks ago, when a piece by their dance correspondent Jann Parry appeared in the *Observer*, I had a horrible sense of *déja vu*. Twelve years ago, on the publication of my report on Britain's "ethnic arts" — *The Arts Britain Ignores* — the very first response to newspaper reports came from a woman in tranquil Salisbury. Why, she wrote indignantly, should "these people" get public funding for their arts when native English people couldn't get enough money for theirs?

The echoes of that rang clearly in Jann Parry's piece. "Why," she wrote, "should the first slice of this meagre cake [i.e. arts funding] go to the dance groups evoking the past rather than those addressing contemporary issues?" The Parry line, impelled by a new season of black dance, was more ambiguous than that of the lady from Salisbury, but not much less xenophobic. The season about which Parry was writing was Danze Pazzaz, a two-week, high-profile gathering together by Greater London Arts — at the Bloomsbury Theatre and the Place — of black dance groups the association funded. It took in not only the middle-scale groups like the African Adzido, but also more community-derived works like those by Oshumare and Sudarshan Dheer and the

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experimentation of Shobana Jeyasinghe.

Jann Parry's objection to all this appears to be two-fold. First she objects to GLA's prioritising an art form that, she claims, is backward-looking (though in fact only the Indian classical dancer Valli Subbiah presented traditional work in Danze Pazzaz in a traditional way). Second, though more by implication, she questions GLA's policy of prioritising Black Arts in its funding. She is not alone in this.

Is it racist to earmark the products of one race rather than another for prior consideration? Why not, you might say, talk equitably about "the arts"? And yes, how nice that would be: how splendid if government did not, for instance, have to issue special directives to ensure that women get co-opted onto public bodies and committees of enquiry; how fine it would be if elderly people were always positively involved in health and leisure activities, and the Sports Council did not have to prioritise them.

Any body with public money and the responsibility for a semblance of fair provision of resources must resist being simply reactive in its practice. It is a truism that market forces do not invariably result in justice; in the nature of things, some groups are far better equipped than others to grab the goodies of society. Schools build in extra points for pupils with special types of needs — for one-parent families, for example. They must be ousting other full-parented children. Is this unfair, two-parentist?

Black arts in Britain are a new growth, hovering between the traditional and the contemporary, still casting about for a role (or roles). Given a massive shot in the arm by the GLC, they developed a sizeable new wave of fledgling dance, video and theatre groups. Not all, it must be admitted, were good (some were frightful, and vanished with the memories of the less far-sighted side of the GLC). The ones that live on and their new audiences are as reasonable an area of prioritisation as the elderly are for the Sports Council. Arts institutions have not been as responsive to this section of work as they should have been. They should start to make up for lost time. It's *how* they do it that's the real matter for debate.

Jann Parry is perfectly correct in perceiving strains and anomalies in "black arts". For a start, a policy like GLA's carries an uncomfortable air of protectionism. Any arts group, say critics bitterly, can get funded so long as it's black. It is an impression that is harmful both for black, who can find it degrading, and for white. Situations in which young inexperienced black groups get more funding than white groups who've struggled to produce quality work for years on a shoestring are not uncommon.

Also opened up is the whole fraught issue of what exactly blackness *is*. "The term Black is used to describe people who are African, Caribbean and from the Indian sub-continent," says the association's guidelines. But this discriminates among minorities, as poet Judy Ling Wong, Vice-Chair of Lambeth Arts Council, has pointed out: "I am Chinese/And I am black enough/For my brothers in resplendent African black/But I am not black enough/Not for the GLA."

Last, the specific term "black dance" creates an entity that does not exist beyond bureaucratic convenience. The Black Dance Forum itself rejected it a year ago, believing that its flattening effect led to a lack of understanding of its varied components. The Black Dance Forum is now just the Dance Forum. The Black Dance Development Trust, without any fuss, limits itself to African-based dance.

So where does all that leave a black arts policy? Does GLA have a leg left to stand on?

GLA's attempts to fulfill its obligations are, without doubt, honourable. However, there can also be little doubt that they need to look again not so much at their aim as at the strategies with which they hope to encompass it. Ironically, Danze Pazzaz, for all GLA's drum-beating, partly proved that. For though the season had its high points — Shobana Jeyasingh and Jeya Chandran's dialogue between classical Indian and contemporary dance in particular — there is no denying that the standard did not live up to GLA's publicity. Some of the groups should never have been staged in such a context.

Prioritising black arts is, on its own, a crude and blunt instrument, prone to rouse anger and incomprehension. It and other rule-of-thumb policies — like reserving a set percentage for black arts — are in fact nothing less than admissions of defeat by funding bodies. GLA, particularly with its Black Arts Consultancy still under way, will have to come up with more subtle, sensitive and well aimed policies with which to answer a genuine need. □

PHOTOGRAPHY

War and peace

Liz Heron

Roger Fenton: Photographer of the 1850s
Hayward until 17 April

THE CRIMEAN War was the first to be photographed. Roger Fenton's multi-part panorama of Sebastopol, his overviews of Balaclava harbour — a dumping ground for the random cargoes of ships whose mess of rigging and sagging sails adds to the desolate clutter — the strained and weary faces of generals and soldiery do nothing to contradict the textbook chaos and demoralisation of that military escapade. They pre-dated the advent of reportage as propaganda, first fully exploited in World War I thanks to mass reproduction. Fenton was commissioned as a war artist, his prints exhibited in a Pall Mall gallery.

It's these pictures that secured Fenton's niche in photo-history. Easy to see why, given their unique status as record, hence their linear connection with photography's future. The Hayward show aims to bring him recognition for a greater breadth of talent: "probably the greatest British photographer of the 19th century". It assembles his landscapes and architectural prints, his still lifes and portraits of the royals, and the fruits of his few years as the British Museum's official photographer. Here lie incidental insights into that prolonged junction of painting and photography, when the latter was subject to the rival claims of art and science, origin of a lasting false dichotomy.

By chance, another Victorian pioneer comes to prominence this week. Margaret Harker's biography of **Henry Peach Robinson** (Blackwell, £35 & £14.95) is published simultaneously with the Barbican opening of an exhibition from the Bradford photography museum. Robinson's elaborate photographic composites, made from different negatives, enact the poetic narratives and genre scenes of Victorian painting. Where such detailed surfaces on canvas can convey the textured precisions of realism, the fact of their artificial construction through the lens leaves them quaintly stranded from any modern notions or practices of *photographic* realism.

Neither figure has received comparable attention before. With the Victorian era already a well-churned site of archaeological raids for ideologies, it's hard to overlook such a convergence of interest.

Roger Fenton: "A Quiet Day in the Mortar Battery" 1855

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The two can't easily be bracketed together, but there's much that they share. Both were professionals, Robinson by entrepreneurial necessity as well as artistic commitment, while Fenton's seriousness as a practitioner and his involvement in establishing the Photographic Society far surpass the dilettantism of his peers. His dedication to the camera lasted roughly a decade, ending, in 1862, with his return to the law and the life of a gentleman. This photographic career, of less coherence and duration than Robinson's, yet more diverse, betrays the luxury of restlessness — partly symptomatic of a time when the camera's role was yet to be defined.

Victorian claims on the camera as a tool of empiricism, allied to sundry forms of classification and to the progress of industrialisation, seem remote here. Fenton's was not an aesthetic of objectivity. Even where it used the camera to apparently transcriptive ends, as with the copies of British Museum artefacts, both spoils and classical emblems of expanding empire, light and shadow were deployed to heighten antique grandeur. In his use of sunlight — falling in elysian shafts, for example, through the tall windows of Stoneyhurst College — he evokes painterly and literary settings infused with the elegaic melancholy of high romanticism.

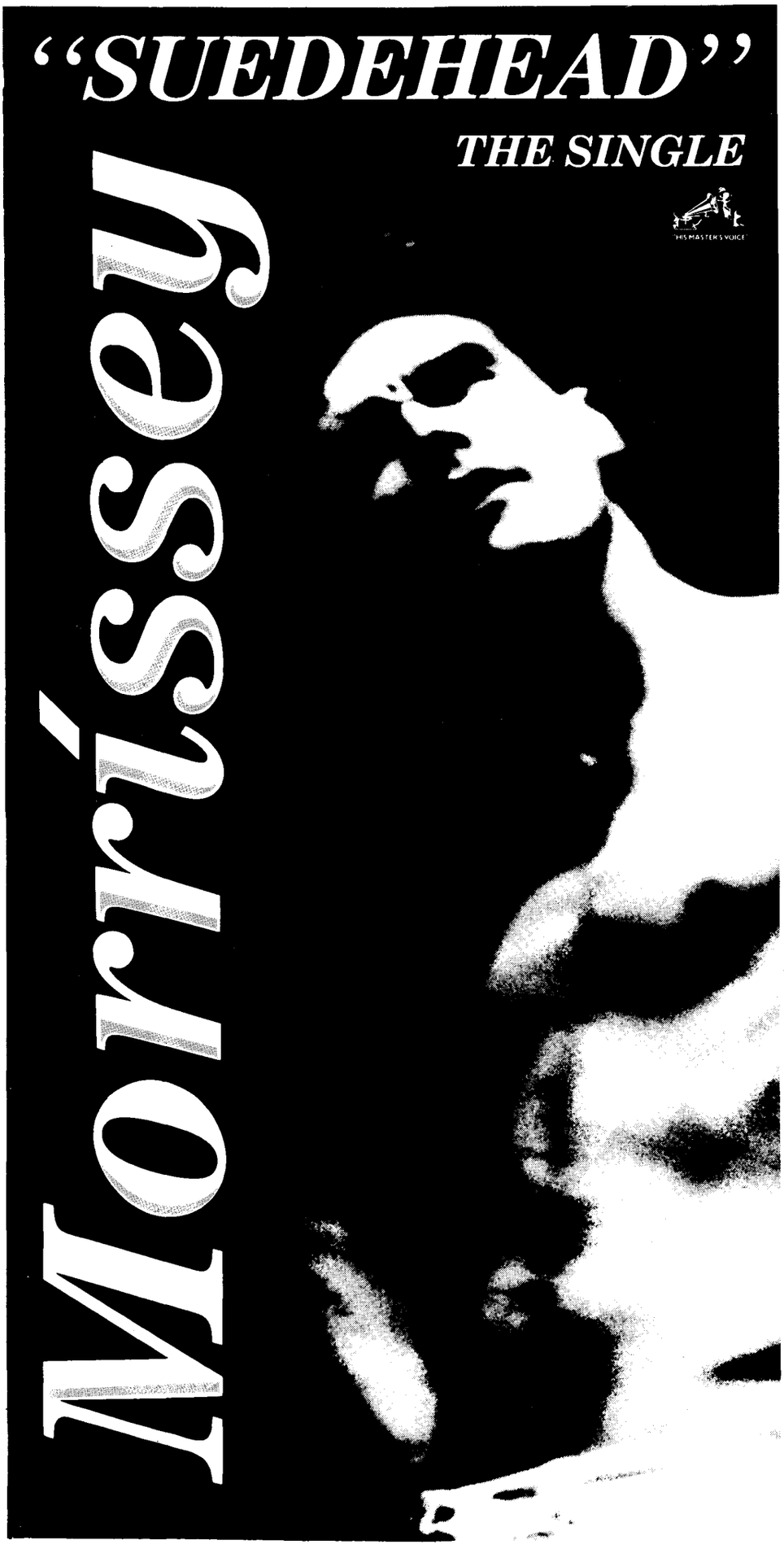
Grandson of a Lancashire cotton millionaire, Fenton nonetheless ignored the visible changes being wrought by industry, to preserve the evidence of an imaginary pastoral past, idyllically changeless. Abbeys, gothic cathedrals and country seats not only symbolise this past through the durability of stones — even in ruins — but architecture assists the camera in fostering the illusion of immutability, giving so many of these scenes a quality of timelessness that's quite alien to photography's later task of memorialising occasion and seizing on the single moment.

Fenton's landscapes are magnificent, all sea and sky, rivers, lakes and tumbling waterfalls, with the barren rockiness of the Welsh hills oddly recalling the Crimea. Despite the familiarity of this photographic genre, early photography's long exposures can be disconcerting, turning moving water into thick folds of heavy satin in an effect of petrification and sometimes merging the elements so that these images become "landscape" as a celebration of nature in the abstract, rather than any landscape in particular.

Robinson too was a romantic refugee from industrialisation. His early work in the 1860s bore a strong Pre-Raphaelite influence. "The Lady of Shalott" was the first of several wilting maidens illustrating the verses of the Romantic poets. For most of the many rustic scenes that followed, models were used as peasants, glowing with wholesome country charm and often wearing clothes that Robinson had bought off the backs of farmworkers, for the sake of what now seems a parody of authenticity.

These are all such pure fictions that, like Fenton's work, they elude photographic time. The limbo that both inhabit exists precisely because it precedes not the invention of photography but the invention of photography's modern attributes and applications, so tethered to a faith in veracity. Only Fenton's Crimea pictures are documentary *in the understood sense of the word.*

Their mismatch with the camera's modern immediacy means that both men's attempts at



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conservation have all the artifice of ethereal worlds long gone. In the face of war, the neo-romantics of the 1940s sought out other lost artificial paradises. The post-industrial '80s aspire to recreate a more complicated idea of "heritage" that's become a struggle for meanings in the present. Seeing the nature of past illusions is always instructive. □

CINEMA

Let me tell you

Simon Cunliffe

I've Heard the Mermaids Singing
Cannon Tottenham Ct Rd, Gate Notting Hill, Screen on the Hill, from 4 March
90 Days
Minema, Knightsbridge

IT IS A PLEASANT change to find oneself addressed directly from the big screen: to be invited into the fiction as confidant, rather than simply trussed up and trundled onto yet another of mainstream cinema's rollercoaster narratives.

With one or two notable exceptions — Woody Allen and Henry Jaglom, for instance — the confessional mode is not a common device. It is, however, one which immediately characterises two low budget films from Canada and accounts in part for their decidedly different, but winning, whimsical charms. In Patricia Rozema's *I've Heard The Mermaids Singing* and Giles Walker's *90 Days* the narrating leads beguile and flatter us with confidences — sufficiently leavened with off-hand humour and self-deprecating vulnerability as to seem inconsequential, or simply amusing. The matters at hand are, however, quite serious.

The heroine of *Mermaids* is Polly. She is 30 and, in her own hesitant, groping words, sort of "a spinster", "an unsuccessful career woman". Physically and socially, she's awkward; others have described her as "organisationally impaired". She introduces herself on a video installation she has set up within her "furnished bachelorette". She has just been employed as a part-time Person Friday to Gabrielle, the cultured curator of a small art gallery — "She was like a fairy-tale . . . she talked to the sort of people who wrote books".

Gabrielle has a lover called Mary. Polly is infatuated with Gabrielle. ("I think I kind of fell in love with the Curator . . . I know love is a pretty strong word when you are talking about another woman and she is not your mother . . .," she tells us.) Gabrielle is kind to Polly but can barely prevent herself from patronising her.

Relationships, then, are the hard currency of this film. It is still rare to see women in love portrayed in such an unfussy and economical manner, and this is one of the film's strengths. But the relationships, particularly between Gabrielle and Polly, also carry thematic resonance. Gabrielle, we learn, owns the gallery by virtue of family money, a background which similarly accounts for her worldliness (complete with French accent, which, in the English-speaking Commonwealth at least, is the ultimate signifier of cultural affluence). Thoroughly intimidated, Polly is a tongue-tied mute in the kingdom of the articulate. She can only fantasise her emancipation.

Flight of fantasy from *I've Heard the Mermaids Singing*

In a monochrome sequence, in an indeterminate time and walking on water with a friend, she rehearses like a would-be citizen about to be examined by the naturalisation panel: "I think a relativist mentality would resolve a lot of conflicts . . . If everyone believed there was no right way . . . that no human being has a direct communication, if you will, with the Omnipotent, the world would be a kinder place." To return to my point about the beguiling nature of this film's narrative style, here the knowing absurdity of the *mise en scène* allows us to swallow whole a speech on which we might otherwise have choked.

Polly's eventual discovery of Gabrielle's fraudulence (her breaking free of the curator's spell while flinging a cup of hot tea in her face) works with an acute retroactive irony on one of the latter's earlier attacks of gallery-speak. "His technique isn't as muscular as his imagery"; "New York is wild for his oblique pragmatism"; "His boyish bravado has a certain charm . . ." This isn't simply debunking in the name of philistinism. Rather it is Rozema's carefully orchestrated protest against the potential tyranny of language and the elitist "culture" it sometimes holds hostage.

90 Days also has its quota of debunking to do and, as it happens, a certain amount of despunking. Alex and Blue are refugees from *The Masculine Mystique*, the first film of Giles Walker's trilogy, and veterans of the third, *The Last Straw*. Tossed out by his wife and mistress simultaneously, Alex's life takes a turn for the better when he is propositioned in a bar by the coolly beautiful Laura; his sperm in exchange for ten grand. His macho vanity allows him to fantasise a sexual relationship with Laura despite her matter-of-fact manner — which at least proves an aid, along with the rubber gloves, sterile container and designated posture, in providing a specimen. Seldom has the ticklish matter of masturbation on screen been quite so amusing.

Against a black confessional-box backdrop, the altogether less confident narrator, Blue, allows us into his secret. He has fallen in love through the post with Hyang-Sook from the Cherry Blossom catalogue. She is about to arrive from Korea and they have the 90 days of her visa in which to marry. Naturally he is anxious and his direct-to-camera earnestness invites our sympathies, but Walker's main objective seems to be to offer a gentle post-feminist critique of male behaviour. Blue's sulky defensiveness and boyish behaviour compromise our willingness to deliver.

In bringing his mail-order marriage to fruition it may seem that Walker, despite the probing, revealing humour of his script, is in fact endorsing this bastion of male chauvinism. It is worth pointing to the irony with which the ceremony flanks the happy couple with Alex and Laura — a role-reversed reminder of the potentially exploitative nature of the mating game.

As in the casting of Sheila McCarthy as wide-eyed, innocent Polly in *Mermaids*, Stefan Wodoslawsky's Blue and Sam Grana's Alex are crucial to the film's success. Wodoslawsky imbues his Blue with a believable, up-tight vulnerability. With his worried brows, his hang-dog jowls and the inclination to locker-room cameraderie etched onto his grin, Sam Grana's Alex is perfect. □

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Why so silent?

M. G. Atkinson, Blackpool
Why the deafening silence about the Palestinian-Israeli problems? The disturbances have been going on from mid-December and every other newspaper and magazine I read has covered them. I haven't found a thing about them in the *New Statesman* and I think I turn over every page.

I have never known you shrink before from shedding your light on any issue, national or international. I should have thought trouble in the Middle East was fairly important. What exactly are you at?

Habermas communication

Simon Eckett, London SW18
Einstein always laughed when people asked him what he thought about the Sexual Revolution and the American Constitution. "I'm a scientist not a diviner," he would reply. Habermas and his reviewer Stephen Howe (*NS* 12 Feb.) should recite this lesson each time they put pen to paper, being presumptuous enough to think expertise in one discipline allows them to comment coherently in others.

Habermas needs to put his philosophy in order before launching into diatribes on anything from political conservatism to cultural vacuums, and Stephen Howe should reflect a little before ending the "freefire zone" which has allowed British philosophers and historians to remain aloof from cultural and political polemics in the press. Any war would spell an end to the painstaking and meticulous Anglo-American philosophical and historical tradition, which is far too precise to warrant front-page sensationalist news.

Habermas's criticism of postmodernity as both conservative and irrationalist, a paradoxical combination, is one of a philosopher unable to come to terms with a radically new conception of the individual. Postmodernists Foucault, Derrida and Rorty argue that we no longer have a measuring tape, a standard by which we can judge the world around us. Much better to question our society *without* resorting to the use of measuring tapes: just think, criticise, discuss and argue.

Habermas vehemently disagrees, arguing that a world without a standard can only signify the onset of irrationalism and conservatism. Thus he proposes a standard which he defines as "the ideal speech situation". Characterised by unlimited discussion and free from the distorting influences of open domination, strategic behaviour or self-deception, it allows us to measure the justice or injustice of a society.

But it's a tortuous and rocky business, creating measuring tapes or standards out of language, which can only operate and communicate through distortion. For example, the names Mike Smith and Jurgen Habermas carry different weights and influence: when Jurgen Habermas speaks or writes, attention is paid and respect given; when Mike Smith does so, his thoughts are quietly discarded. More serious though is Habermas's conception of ourselves as ordinary human beings: we must shed our individual characteristics, our self-deceiving and domineering natures, and become increasingly alike in order to reach the ideal speech situation and enjoy perfect undistorted discussion. Habermas's theory of communication results in an insidious and dangerous attack upon our freedom and individuality.

Habermas's wail against the postmodernists reverberates, but ends up in a blind alley littered with his earlier attempts to rekindle the spirit of the Frankfurt School and Critical Theory. Postmodernism may have taken away the props of reason and language, but it cannot stand accused of either irrationalism or conservatism. Rather it allows us to gather strength before venturing beyond postmodernism into a new heroic Creationist age of freedom and individuality.

Sound economic sense

Peter Howard Marks, London NW11
It is upsetting to have to read in the *New Statesman* (29 Jan.) Jeremy Seabrook's view (more suited to say, the *Daily Mail*) that a Labour government could not provide the money for all its "brave humanitarian impulses".

£2.5 billion spent on the Health Service is not only a prescription for a healthy nation, it is also a prescription for a healthy economy (by no means a synonym for capitalism!). £2.5 billion given away in tax cuts would go largely to the wealthy, and they will spend it abroad; on Mercedes Benz cars and villas in Spain. Tax cuts would weaken the economy. But £2.5 billion spent on the NHS would be spent here, without harming the balance of payments.

Further it would help reduce unemployment and the enormous waste of resources that unemployment represents.

Humanitarianism is sound economic sense!

Detour

David Edgar, Birmingham
It's interesting to see that David Stayt of the Campaign for the Feminine Woman is claiming left-wing credentials ("if there was a proper socialist party I'd probably vote for it") in his illuminating conversation with Francis Wheen (*NS* 12 Feb.). Well, if Stayt was a CND activist in the 60s, and a socialist now, then he went on a bit of a detour en route. In the late 70s, when he actually founded his gruesome organisation (not three years ago, as he seems to be claiming now), he was a member of the right-wing Tory National Association for Freedom. Indeed, the NAFF paper *Free Nation* — describing Stayt as a "Gloucestershire member" — glowingly previewed his "cogently argued attack on the Women's Lib Movement", shown under the banner of the Campaign for the Feminine Woman, in BBC2's Open Door slot on 25 November 1978.

Point-scoring

Anthony Quinn, London N1
Judith Williamson can award herself a hearty slap on the back for spotting the symbolism in *The Stepfather (NS* 12 Feb.), which apparently is "so enjoyable for us ideological misfits". Unfortunately for the rest of us she is so committed to practising this deconstructive surgery that she gives away the film's ending: "sorry for spoiling the plot" she adds in feeble parenthesis. I need hardly remind Ms Williamson that she has a duty as reviewer to entertain those who may not have seen the film (and for whom the denouement is now ruined), and not merely to gratify herself with intellectual point-scoring.

Her powers of observation are not entirely infallible, however. The man pursuing the murderer in the above film is not a "reporter" at all. He's the brother of an earlier murder victim,

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as was made clear throughout. But then, if you're busy looking for symbolism such prosaic details doubtless pass you by.

ILEA tactics

R. J. Jarrett, London SE26
Lincoln Crawford's arguments (*NS* 12 Feb.) in favour of the ILEA Labour Group forming a majority opposition might equally well support the more dramatic and possibly more honourable tactic of mass resignation.

What future?

Anthony Dykes, Leader, Camden Council
Christian Wolmar (*NS* 5 Feb.) is right to pose two major questions facing Labour councils — in face of the poll tax, education, housing bills, privatisation should we seek to remain in power and how do we deal with unbridgeable budget gaps? Unfortunately he then, so far as Camden is concerned, gets his facts wrong.

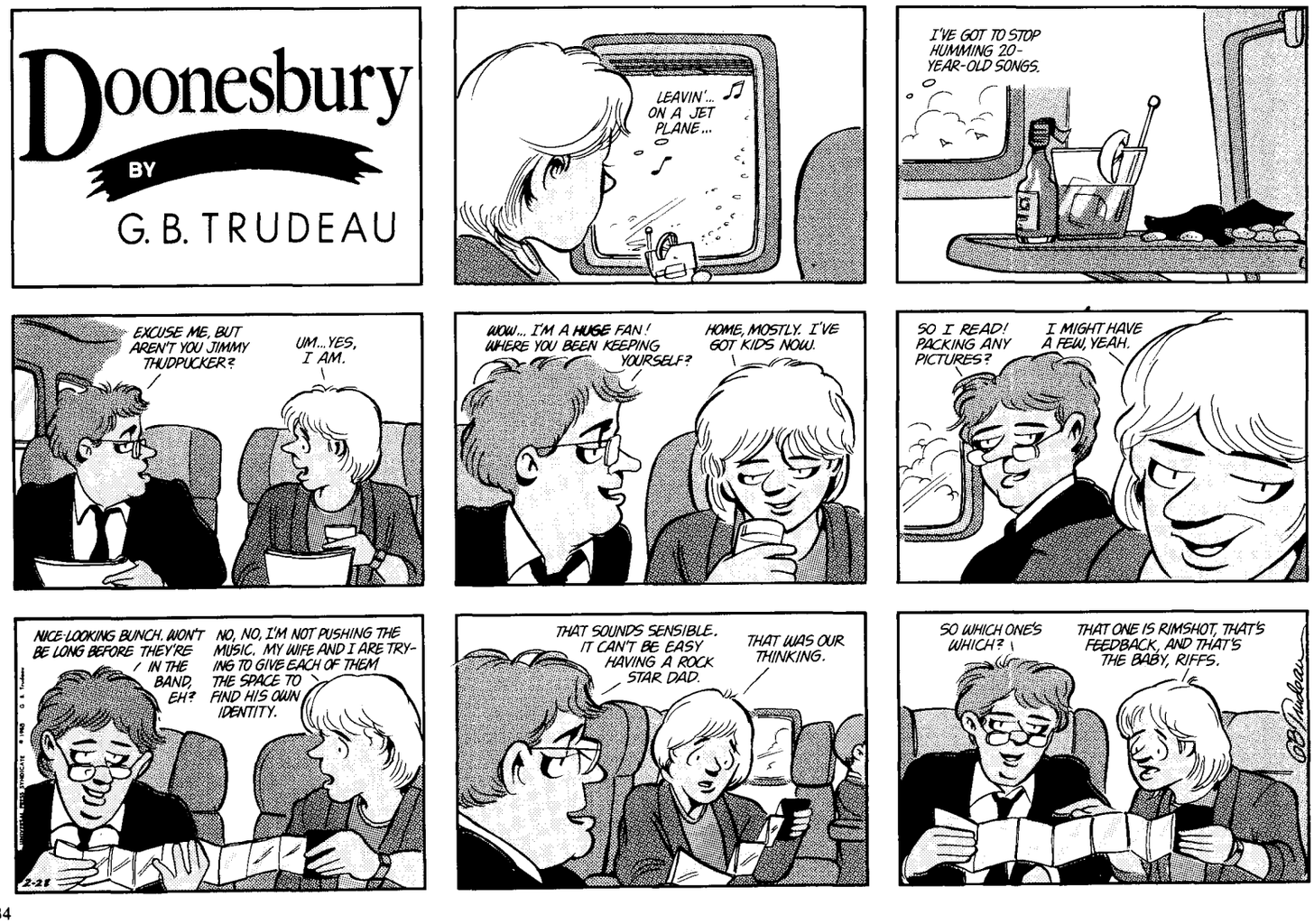
Camden, unlike other ratecapped councils, does not receive rate support grant. We last received it in 1980/81. For the three years prior to ratecapping we delivered single figure rates increases and real growth in services and jobs. Thus when we came to ratecapping, unlike some other ratecapped councils, Camden had no balances or contingencies and neither could we juggle with the complexities of rate support grant to our advantage. We also face one of the largest unbridgeable budget gaps.

Nevertheless we have sought to bridge "gaps" in the first three years of ratecapping of £14 million (85/86), £30 million (86/87) and £54 million (87/88). In this period services were expanded and new jobs created. This was done largely by finance mechanisms — "creative accountancy". Christian Wolmar implies there is still scope for this. Most creative accounting involves borrowing: because of statements from Nicholas Ridley, the Audit Commission and press comment, ratecapped councils find it extremely difficult, nearly impossible, to borrow. If it is possible then the rates are extremely high and repayment required before the next general election. In short creative accounting as such is not even a partial, temporary solution.

Christian states Camden panicked and attempts to support this by claiming Camden may underspend for the financial year. The facts show a different story. In July 1987, due in part to the failure of some creative accountancy measures, there was an unbridgeable gap of £11 million for the current year. We took measures to deal with this including curtailing recruitment. Despite these measures we are not currently facing an underspend on this year, it is the reverse, the most recent (and optimistic) assessment projects a deficit of £2.8 million.

For 1988/90, if we had simply projected our original budget plan for 1987/88 forward, the gap would have been £70 million. We haven't done this. Instead we turned the process around. We estimated the maximum we could resource. We (i.e. councillors) accorded priorities to each area. Small teams of councillors then oversaw, through an intensive three-month period, a restructuring of council service provision. Priority was given to frontline services — most particularly Social Services, Housing, and grants to the voluntary sector. This doesn't mean there haven't been or won't be cuts, but from the outset we have sought to avoid a random, across the board approach.

I would agree that there does need to be a discussion about what future (if any) there is for Labour in local government. Currently Labour policy is to retain control, use all the resources we can to tackle inequality, recognising all options are cuts options. We must recognise however that the Tory attack against Labour in local government is gathering pace. We do need urgently to discuss a political, rather than merely financial and reactive, strategy to contend with this attack. The discussions required in seeking to reach such a strategy will need to be informed, honest, without posture or delusions and certainly without the rancour, opportunism and denouncements of the "you're not a socialist" kind which have unfortunately characterised much of the discussions on the left.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Inconsolable

Diana Eden, London SW17
Hugo Williams's column was a weekly shaft of clarity and delight. He alerted us to the addiction-making properties of "Blind Date"; he wrote — *definitively* — about the media coverage of the Zeebrugge disaster; he was, in short, *fucking marvellous*. His departure is the *NS*'s loss and, while you and Hugo may not know whether to cry or laugh (*NS* 19 Feb.), I remain yours, inconsolable.

Setting our own agenda

Celia Kitzinger, Cambs.
It's ironic that Mary McIntosh, in her review (*NS* 12 Feb.) of my book *The Social Construction of Lesbianism*, should accuse radical feminism of being a "luxury" which confirms "the worst fears of the moral right". Her attack on radical feminist politics is itself part of this broader anti-feminist backlash which has become respectable with the rise of the new right and the moral panic around Aids.

My argument in the book is that it is in response to this backlash that lesbians have retreated from the radical feminist politics of the '70s, and are increasingly resorting to the argument that "we're just like heterosexuals really". If there is one lesson we can learn from events of the last few months, as Clause 28 has moved towards becoming law, it is that these liberal feminist arguments *don't work*. The moral right has a fairly accurate perception of the importance of the nuclear family and the institution of compulsory heterosexuality in maintaining the status quo. They know that lesbianism threatens patriarchal power, and are not fooled by the arguments of liberal apologists. That is why there is nothing to be gained by insisting on our own normality and harmlessness.

The moral right is setting the agenda, and liberals respond with the claim that lesbians (and gay men) can be assimilated into that agenda. Radical feminism sets up its *own* agenda and constructs a moral and political language which challenges our oppression, and envisions an alternative. Radical feminism has never been more necessary than it is today.

Nothing to offer

Tony Wilcock, London W2
Towards the end of his article on why Tony Benn should have a try for the Labour leadership, John Lloyd (*NS* 5 Feb.) says that "many [people in the Labour Party] who had been unilateralist are now changing into multilateralists, if only because they have seen that they cannot persuade the electorate to their beliefs."

The reason the Labour Party has failed to convert more people to the unilateralist standpoint is that *they have simply not tried to do so.*

It was the height of folly for the party leadership to adopt such a defensive stand on the issue at the time of the general election. The opportunity was there to pour scorn on a Prime Minister who only a few weeks previously had talked about how she trusted Mr Gorbachev but now was so afraid of him that she couldn't foresee any major steps in ridding Europe of its nuclear weapons as far ahead as she might care to forecast.

The Labour leadership never attempted to attack the Tory position. They never even mentioned the idea of peace and disarmament as being a major objective of Labour policy. On the contrary, every time Mr Kinnock opened his mouth he talked about increasing our conventional weaponry. And no doubt every time he did so he lost thousands of CND votes and helped to persuade the electorate that on this issue at least the Labour Party had nothing much to offer.

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Weekend competition

No 3014 **Set by Russell Lucas**

Extracts, please, from a prospectus floating the Royal Family as a public company. Max. 150 words, for Wednesday 9 March.

No 3011 **Set by Russell Lucas**

Excerpts from (James) Anderton Psalms or the *Andertonian Creed.*

Report **By Gray Dorn**

Forty-two entries this week, making almost a 100 per cent rise since my return. No doubt my encouraging remarks a fortnight ago have helped in this (so sucks to you, pseudonymous rich bastard from 12 Flask Walk, Hampstead, who wrote attributing low entries to corruption and vendettas — and now we have your address you may live to regret that second accusation). Of course the rising graph would be more accurate if other judges contributed figures: the problem here is that Bio and Hughes get a little flustered adding up beyond ten whereas for de Meaner counting inevitably revives unpleasant memories of her wartime *duties* (I must stress that word) in Yugoslavia. Meanwhile, £12 each to the most offensive entries, enough for a dozen packs of Mates or an eighth of hash. Have fun.

Blessed is the policeman that hath not walked with the ungodly
nor eaten with criminals at official functions.

For the Lord will abhor the deceitful man
who leaketh the doings of the Force
yet He will reward the man who keepeth his own counsel
as to the misdeeds of his superiors
and is faithful to his Lodge.

They that are corrupt and abominable in their doings
even such shall the Lord chastise with whips and scorpions
yea, even to the gates of Kincora Boys' Home.

JOHN STANLEY

I believe in the divinely sourced and user-friendly short-wave radio messages that counsel me to smite the wicked wherever they may be, and to inform the press thereof.

I believe in the flowing and manly beard that is the true sign of the Lord's anointed, not however to be confused with that of the blaspheming Fidel Castro.

I believe in conjugal relations carried out in the missionary position, with a sheath only if absolutely necessary to health and peace of mind.

I believe in the BBC when under government control, BP when not under government control, and the RUC whether or not under government control.

I believe in the free market and suppression of the cannabis trade, the sanctity of life and punishment in kind, good British common sense and voices that come out of the sky.
I'll believe anything.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

Lo, I am clad in the surtout of my righteousness, for the Lord hath spoken to me as unto no other.

For though there be Stalkers through the wilderness who traduce me, and others who Labour most wickedly to defile my name, yet the Lord shall keep me out of the snare of their slanders and the net of their provocations.

For, verily, even in the thwack of the truncheon and the clang of the riot-shield am I justified, for the Lord has chosen me and I can do no wrong.

Lo, it is the Lord Himself that hath appointed me to be the flail of the felon and the scourge of the ungodly, and mighty shall be my joy in the smiting of the malefactor.

Yea, I shall revel in the chastisement of the offender, and my ecstasy thereat shall run over . . .

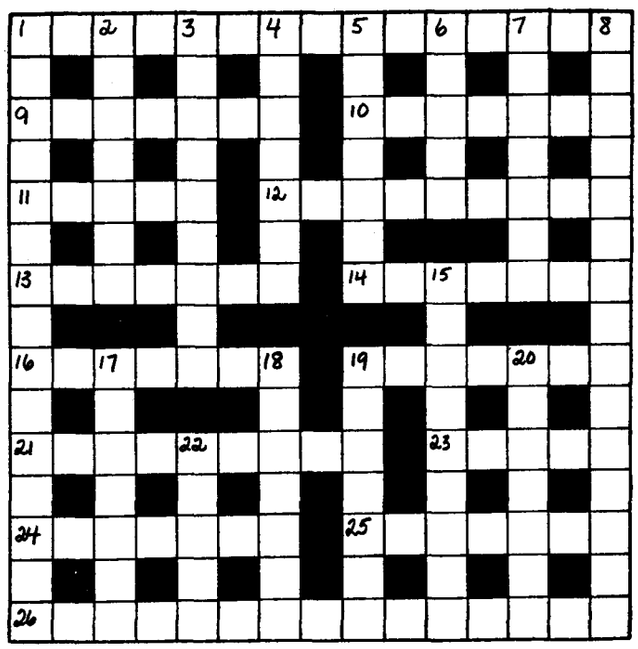
JON FERNSIDE

The Lord is my Flagellator. I shall now watch
All criminals being flogged to within an inch of their lives.
Yea, or even closer if that turns out to be possible.
Yea, I shall bathe in the goriest of the pools of their blood for ever.
He leadeth me to all the gays of Gomorrah
And castrateth them within my sight.
Yea, even to the removal of the privatest parts.
Lo, he delivereth into my hands the blackest of all the spades
So I may give them the roughest of roughings up
And swear they fell down the station steps.
Yea, doth He not grant to me, His Personal Prophet
Immunity from prosecution
For all officers of the law for ever.

E. O. PARROTT

Weekend Crossword 1587

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1587, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ by first post 15 March.



Name_____

Address_____

ACROSS

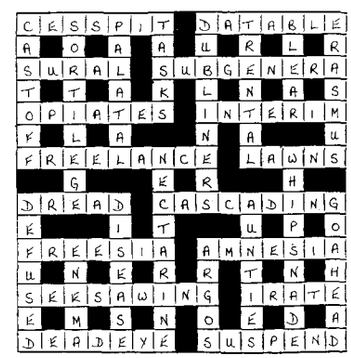
1. Engaged in charitable activity when it is hot in a variety of plain and hot in a sort of forest (15)
9. Sets up the not-outs before the last collapse (7)
10. Humming although idle? (7)
11. Copying the sound of a bullet (5)
12. Articles about iron being used in the finest celebration (9)
13. Writer who makes a point in a rambling sermon (7)
14. Fate changes with a drink inside, but it may tell one's fortune (7)
16. Makes a fresh plan for the inexperienced among socialists (7)
19. Town which shows a sailor the results of firing (7)
21. Belief in disorder is a shrewd philosophy (9)
23. The animal is almost cunning (5)
24. Succeed in it without a female (7)
25. The lover discovers there is nothing in the wrong person (7)
26. Perform in an athletic manner to be a capital candidate? (5,2,4,4)

DOWN

1. Agreements which lead to the opposite extreme of general peace? (7,8)
2. Influence in something which comes to a point (7)
3. Freedom from suffering is seen from a different angle in the East (9)
4. Bat badly in improvised nets, so that one has no more trials (7)
5. New copy of a coloured craft (7)
6. The demonstration takes place quietly on the top of the house (5)
7. Condition of country spoils calm tie (7)
8. Lord of Hunt (5,2,3,5)
15. Let us go abroad carrying one with us for references (9)
17. Coin depicting the Queen in the opposite of what carries a monarch's head (7)
18. Boy in cricket practice rises although hit (7)
19. Play with it and it could be in a mess (7)
20. Fix up so that a little river flowed in time (7)
22. Being heartless, show the company blushing (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1585



Prizewinners to 1585

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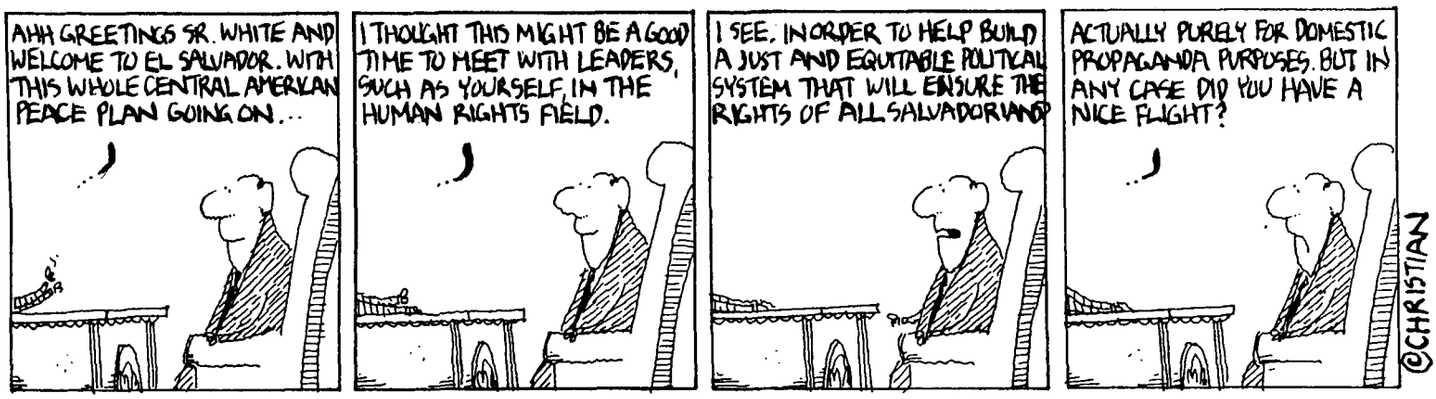
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I THOUGHT THIS MIGHT BE A GOOD TIME TO MEET WITH LEADERS, SUCH AS YOURSELF, IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD.
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ACTUALLY PURELY FOR DOMESTIC PROPAGANDA PURPOSES. BUT IN ANY CASE DID YOU HAVE A NICE FLIGHT?
@CHRISTIAN

Chess

I MUST START with a correction to the pairings I gave last week for the candidates' quarter-finals. Short is indeed to play Speelman and Timman meets Portisch. But FIDE has ruled that the other two matches are to be Karpov v Hjartarson and Yusupov v Spraggett. I can't say that I understand why. The general idea is that pairings should be made according to seeding by strength, Wimbledon-fashion — 1v8, 2v7, etc. In the January 1988 rating lists Spraggett is 2580, whereas Hjartarson is 2590, so one would have thought that Spraggett should have been in the number 8 spot. FIDE must have used some form of weighted average over several rating lists (which are published at 6 monthly intervals). Other figures from the January list are: Karpov 2715 (35 points behind Kasparov), Timman 2675, Short 2630, Speelman 2625, Yusupov 2620 and Portisch 2610. If the latest list had been the only yardstick applied, Speelman would have been paired against Yusupov.

It is doubtful whether Spraggett benefits by avoiding Karpov and facing instead the other Soviet GM. Karpov must be haunted by the fear that there will be no way back, no redemption of the opportunities missed in his four matches against Kasparov, whereas Yusupov is on the way up, his best games yet to be played. As the sole survivor from the massacre of the Soviets in St John (where Sokolov, Vaganian, Salov and Ehlvest were all put out), Yusupov moves closer to assuming a key position. You see, because of the way the world championship cycle operates, it is the *other* Soviet player, the one who is not champion, who is the main enemy. You cannot get to Botvinnik because Smyslov blocks the path. In front of Petrosian stood Spassky — ultimately his conqueror, but also a sort of shield.

This time the contenders from Western Europe — Short, Timman and Speelman — may find that it is Yusupov who is the chief obstacle on the path to Kasparov. A very large obstacle he is too, ferocious in his concentration at the board. Since winning the world junior championship in 1977 he has progressed steadily, with just one traumatic setback — his defeat by Sokolov in the last candidates' series in a match in which he had been leading all the way. But he seems to have recovered without visible scars. Indeed the USSR owe their gold medals in the Dubai Olympiad to his sterling performance, his win against Short in the USSR-England match being absolutely crucial.

What I find particularly impressive about Yusupov is the universality of his style. Even very strong players can have the weakness of being one-sided, showing a partiality for certain schemes or types of position. But if Yusupov has a weakness, it is far from obvious. He has deliberately cultivated a broad approach and handles any type of game with equal comfort. Here is a game from last year's Interpolis tournament in which he takes revenge on Sokolov. Notice how he deals with Black's hanging pawns in perfect conformity with the Nimzowitschian principle: *Restrain, blockade, destroy* (21. e3). It's a performance which, in its combination of tactical means and strategic ends, prompts comparison with Capablanca, the Mozart of chess. But in one respect there is no comparison — Yusupov works much harder at the game!

Yusupov-Sokolov, Tilburg 1987.
Queen's Indian.
1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 b6 4. g3 Ba6 5. Nbd2 Bb7 6. Bg2 Be7 7. 0-0 0-0 8. Qc2 d5 9. cxd5 exd5 10. Ne5 c5 11. dxc5 bxc5 There is a debate in this position about whether to recapture with Bishop or pawn. In general one would prefer to take with the pawn on c5, because the duo of 'hanging pawns' at d5 and c5 give more dynamic possibilities than the isolated d-pawn on its own. But in this instance the hanging pawns are not getting the sort of support they need, because Black's pieces are not very aggressively posted. Perhaps we should blame it on the fashionable, but artificial, manoeuvre . . . Ba6-b7. **12. Ndc4!? Re8** Sokolov is trying to improve on Vaganian-Timman, Amsterdam 1986, in which 12 . . . Qc8 13. Na5 proved good for White. But he does not find a satisfactory solution to Black's problems. The big question is whether White has any convincing sacrificial line after 12 . . . Qc7! 13. Bf4 g5. **13. Bf4 Qc8 14. Na5 Ba6 15. Rfd1 Nbd7** The Black pieces are in a tangle and Yusupov uses his raking Bishops to pile on the pressure. **16. Bh3! Qc7 17. Nec4 Qc8 18. Ne3!** Hammering away at the weak pawns. **d4 19. Nec4 Bxc4** After this Black really ought to succumb to White's Bishop-pair. But how else to meet the threat of 20. Bg2? If 19 . . . Nd5 20. Ne5. **20. Nxc4 Qa6 21. e3 Nb6 22. Nxb6 Qxb6 23. exd4 cxd4 24. Bc7! Qc5 25. Qxc5 Bxc5 26. Rac1 Ne4** Black is going to lose a pawn however he plays. E.g., 26 . . . Bb6 27. Bxb6 axb6 28. Rxd4 Rxa2 29. Rb4. **27. Bf5 Bb6 28. Bd7** Trying to avoid the tedium of a technical phase. He could just have taken a pawn directly with 28. Bxb6 axb6 29. Rxd4. **Re7 29. Bc6 Rf8 30. Bxb6 axb6 31. Re1 f5 32. f3 d3 33. Rcd1 d2 34. Bd5+** I wonder if Yusupov had foreseen at move 28 that here he cannot win a piece with 34. Re2/e3 because of 34 . . . Nc3!. **Kh8 35. Rxd2 Nxd2 36. Rxe7 g6 37. Re2 Nb1 38. Re1 Rd8 39. Rd1 1-0.** There is no escape for the Black Knight: 39 . . . Kg7 40. Kf2 Kf6 41. Ke3 Ke5 42. f4+ followed by Kd4 and Rxb1.

Solution to last week's position from **Tal-Balashov, Moscow 1987** [r1b2r1k/-6pp/pq1bp3/2p2p2/2B2P2/2N4R/-PPP1Q1PP/4R1K1] The old magician conjured a mate with **1. Rxh7+! Kxh7 2. Qh5+ Kg8 3. Rxe6!** Now if 3 . . . Rf7 4. Re8+ or if 3 . . . Bxe6 4. Bxe6+ Rf7 5. Qxf7+ and 6. Qh5 mate. **Qb4 4. Rh6+ 1-0.**

George Botterill

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This England

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☐ Richard Simmonds, Tory MEP for Wight and Hampshire East, in a speech yesterday imploring hoteliers on the Isle of Wight to learn foreign tongues, revealed that he sometimes lurks around English hotels posing as a monoglot Frenchman. His jabbering is often greeted by blank expressions. — *The Guardian* (George Moor)

☐ A Royal Marines officer told magistrates at Stroud, Glos, yesterday how he "gave his horse its head" and joined an imaginary British cavalry charge as he drove a Royal Navy Vauxhall Cavalier at 100mph along the M5. Major Christopher Gilding, 45, said he was so imbued with patriotic pride as he sped along to the rousing strains of Beethoven's "Battle Symphony" on his tape player that he failed to spot a pursuing police car. — *Daily Telegraph* (Russell Holmes)

☐ A Kent holiday company has "by popular request", declared one of its chalets at the French ski resort of Megeve a no-smoking zone. And, as a somewhat off-beat extra attraction, each one of its properties will be provided with a copy of the controversial book *Spycatcher*. — *ASH — Supporters' News* (Janet Mearns)

☐ With the troubles on the Stock Exchange and a general feeling of tension, not only over this country but a great number of others, most people need a tonic. — *Health Now* (Sara Spain)

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A When that spaceship is [illegible] Clarke's RAMA – incomprehensible, impossible to divert from its chosen course, and totally oblivious of all attempts at communication. Sounds familiar. But unlike the Prime Minister, RAMA came from light years away and was only passing through the Solar System for a few months – read about it in **Arthur C. Clarke's** prize-winning RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA.

V G S F

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